# Sunshine Coast Environment Council: Forty Years Strong

**ELAINE GREEN** 





Disclaimer: Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author and not of the Sunshine Coast Environment Council Inc.

Every effort has been made to present factual information however it is acknowledged that reliance on secondary sources of information may have led to unintentional errors.

Copyright Sunshine Coast Environment Council Inc.

35 Howard Street Nambour Q4560

#### www.scec.org.au

Except as provided by the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this publication may be reproduced or communicated to the public without prior permission of the publisher. It is intended as a record and source of information for researchers and students. Author: Elaine Green

Researcher and Editorial Assistant: Inga Green

Cover Image by John Burrows

Thanks to Ben Child and Narelle McCarthy for the idea for this book

Special thanks to John Burrows for the use of his wonderful photos

#### Acknowledgement of Country

The Sunshine Coast Environment Council (SCEC) acknowledges that we live, work, learn and create on the land of the Kabi Kabi and Jinibara people and would like to recognise the strength, resilience and capacity of Australia's First Nations People. We recognise that these have always been places of cultural, spiritual, social and economic significance.

The Traditional Custodians' unique values, and ancient and enduring cultures, deepen and enrich the life of our community and environment. We wish to pay respect to their Elders – past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the important role First Nations People continue to play within the Sunshine Coast community. Sovereignty has never been ceded. It always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

Proudly supported by the Grants Program



### **Table of Contents**

Chapter 1: Our First Conservationists.	5-6
Chapter 2: Early Days 1960s-1970s Birth of the Conservation Moveme	
in Queensland	7
Sand Mining	7-8
Crown land leases	9
Canal development	9-10
Coastal Management	10-11
High Rise	11
National Parks	12-13
Nuclear power	13-14
World Environment Day	14-15
The Conondales	15-16
Growth, growth, growth	16
Chapter 3: World Environment Day (V	VED)
Festival	17-27
1978 - 1983	
The WED Festival moves to Cotton	Tree
	17-18
The 1980s	

The 1980s	18-19
WED Mural at Cotton Tree June 7 <sup>th</sup> , 1	L992
	19
The 1990s	20-21
Highlights of the 2000	21
Changes!	22
Looking Towards the Future	22
WED goes to University	23-25
Back to Cotton Tree	25
2020 and Beyond	25-27

Chapter 4: Formation of SC	EC 28-34
1980 - 1984	
Member Groups in 1984	29-34

Chapter 5: A Tribute to Stan Tutt......35-36

Chapter 6: SCEC Environment Centre	and
Shop in Nambour	37-41
1984 - 2000	37-40
The Environment Centre 1990 -202	<b>24</b> 40-41

	$\smile$
Chapter 7: Communications	2-47
· First Newsletters	
<b>Eco Echo</b> 42	
Eco Echo Editors43	
ECO	
	. 47
Chapter 8: Wildflowers 48	-53
Christmas Bells	
42-year campaign for wildflowers on	, 15
Crown Land	-50
Sunshine Coast Wildflower Show	
Battle for Emu Mountain52	-55
Chanter 0: First SCEC Compaigns	
Chapter 9: First SCEC Campaigns	
Toxic chemicals in the 1980s	
Marina Gardens 1973 - 1990	
Save Mt Coolum 1985-199058	
Tourist Developments	
Noosa Spit and River Mouth60	
Maroochy River Mouth	
Pumicestone Passage62	-64
Maroochy River North Shore64	
The Conondales66	68-
Time for some Fun	. 68
Chapter 10: Coming of Age 69	
2020 Vision Conference	. 69
Maroochy Conservation Strategy	
(1990 – 1991)	. 70
Green Dinners	. 70
Population Growth70	)-71
Water supply	.71
Sewerage71	-72
Catchment Care72	-73
Unemployment	. 73
LEAP73	-74
Growth Conference	. 74
Vegetation Clearance Summit	. 75
Other events75	-76
Sunshine Coast Environment Awards	. 76
Consultation76	j-77
1990s Major Campaigns77	'-78
Regional Forests Agreement (RFA) 78	5-79

Some of Our Valuable Volunteers .....80-91

#### Chapter 11: Fighting for Coastal Wallum

	92-102
Emu Swamp	92-93
Sunshine Motorway	93-95
Marcus High Dunes	95-96
Noosa North Shore	96-97
Natural Heritage Listing	97-98
Development Lease 3	98-100
Twin Waters and R301	100
Mooloolah National Park	101
Habitat 2000	.101-102

#### Chapter 12: Abel Honey's Legacy ......102-106

Chapter 13: Hangovers	107-112
Last Line of Defence	107-108
Tewantin to Tin Can Bay Road	108-109
Land Clearing	109
Crown Lands Wins	109-110
Back to the Wallum Corridor	110-111
Coolum Ridges	111-112
Koalas	112

Chapter 14: New Beginnings	113-122
The Cane Lands	114
SEQ Regional Plan	114
New Directions for SCEC	114-115
Climate Change	115-117
Mary River Madness	117-118
Powerlink – Woolooga to Coor	oy and
Eerwah Vale Sub-station	118
10,000 Solar Rooves Program .	118-119
More Population Growth	119
Caloundra South	119-121
Growth Management	121-122

Chapter 15: Towards 2020	122-133
Staffing changes	122-123
Campaigns	123-124
Sekisui House at Yaroomba	124-127
Twin Waters West	127-129
Don't Rock the Maroochy	129-131
Backstory	131
Coolum West	131-133
Chapter 16: Forty Years Strong	133-139
COVID-19	133-134
Climate Action	134-135
Nets Out Now	136
State Forests	136-137
Les Hall Conservation Award	137
SCEC Forty Years Strong	138
Koalas Are Still in Danger	139
Chapter 17: 2024 and Beyond	140-146
Chapter 17: 2024 and Beyond Native Title	
	140
Native Title	140 141
Native Title Forest Wins	140 141 142
Native Title Forest Wins Portion 480	140 141 142 142-143
Native Title Forest Wins Portion 480 Coastal Emu Reserve	
Native Title Forest Wins Portion 480 Coastal Emu Reserve The Regional Inter-Urban Break (IU	
Native Title Forest Wins Portion 480 Coastal Emu Reserve The Regional Inter-Urban Break (IU Stand Up for Nature	
Native Title Forest Wins Portion 480 Coastal Emu Reserve The Regional Inter-Urban Break (IU Stand Up for Nature Smart Regional Planning	
Native Title Forest Wins Portion 480 Coastal Emu Reserve The Regional Inter-Urban Break (IU Stand Up for Nature Smart Regional Planning Nuclear Power (not again!) And Finally	
Native Title Forest Wins Portion 480 Coastal Emu Reserve The Regional Inter-Urban Break (IU Stand Up for Nature Smart Regional Planning Nuclear Power (not again!)	
Native Title Forest Wins Portion 480 Coastal Emu Reserve The Regional Inter-Urban Break (IU Stand Up for Nature Smart Regional Planning Nuclear Power (not again!) And Finally	
Native Title Forest Wins Portion 480 Coastal Emu Reserve The Regional Inter-Urban Break (IU Stand Up for Nature Smart Regional Planning Nuclear Power (not again!) And Finally About the Author Current Member Groups	
Native Title Forest Wins Portion 480 Coastal Emu Reserve The Regional Inter-Urban Break (IU Stand Up for Nature Smart Regional Planning Nuclear Power (not again!) And Finally	
Native Title Forest Wins Portion 480 Coastal Emu Reserve The Regional Inter-Urban Break (IU Stand Up for Nature Smart Regional Planning Smart Regional Planning Nuclear Power (not again!) And Finally About the Author Current Member Groups (To 2024)	
Native Title Forest Wins Portion 480 Coastal Emu Reserve The Regional Inter-Urban Break (IU Stand Up for Nature Smart Regional Planning Smart Regional Planning Nuclear Power (not again!) And Finally About the Author Current Member Groups (To 2024) Lists of Management Committees a	

 $\mathcal{C}$ 



### Chapter 1 Our First Conservationists

In Australia, sustainable land use by managing natural resources in a way that does not compromise future generations may seem a relatively new 20<sup>th</sup> Century concept. However, for the First Nations People it was an integral part of their everyday lives, systems of kinship and totems and their Dreaming stories. They were truly the first conservationists, looking after the land for at least 60,000 years by hunting, fishing and gathering food sustainably.

The First Nations People of the Sunshine Coast shared a land of plenty. Through generations of trial and error, the best use for every plant was discovered and from nature every need could be fashioned. Knowledge of plants and animals, their life cycles, seasons and interrelationships was both vast and intricate. Because it was essential for their survival, this knowledge was passed on through the generations by oral tradition and regulated by a complex system of ritual and environmental law known as *Mimburi*.

#### Kabi Kabi elder Bev Hand wrote:

"Mimburi means "continual flow". Some people have misinterpreted its meaning as referring to a source of water. However, Mimburi is about the continual flow of everything from the birds and the bees to the earth and the sun. More importantly, Mimburi was a law that was severely enforced and therefore the law was strictly adhered to. The natural resources of the region were managed according to the law of Mimburi. The way you travelled, farmed, cultivated, consumed, traded and utilised the natural resources was controlled by a complex system of lores, customs and beliefs. This law of Mimburi was all about environmental sustainability." The First Nations People lived with a welldeveloped traditional culture and social life – until the coming of the white people.

The seasonally bountiful Bunya Pine (Araucaria *bidwilli)* was considered sacred, with ownership passing on to successive generations. In recognition of this, the NSW Governor General Sir George Gipps issued a Proclamation in 1842 that prohibited the cutting down of the Bunya tree, as well as settlement in any area where the Bunya tree grew, which included what is now known as the Blackall Range area of the Sunshine Coast. When Queensland became a separate colony in 1859 one of their first Acts of Parliament voided previous protection of the Bunya tree and the areas in which it grew, opening the land up for settlers.

Historian Dr Ray Kerkhove in the preface to his "The Great Bunya Gatherings; early accounts" states "...the Bunya Gathering (note: which took place where Lake Baroon now sits, near Maleny) was arguably the largest and most influential Indigenous gathering in Australia. It engaged a great slice of Australia, not only during its occurrence, but at all times. This is because even back at home, attendees were busy creating corroborees and crafts that would be shared at the event. They also looked forward to - or perhaps dreaded - the marriage arrangements, judicial decisions and ceremonies that would be made at that spot. Finally, they spent weeks to months simply journeying there and back – often conducting further 'business' (ceremonies etc.) enroute."

Hand in hand with land settlement, the colonial displacement and attempted destruction of First Nations People's culture occurred very quickly between the 1840s and 1880s. By the beginning of the 1900s the ancient tradition of large gatherings for the hinterland Bunya feasts had come to an end.

Through generations of oppression however the First Nations People survived and kept their cultural knowledge alive. Today there is a slow but encouraging recognition of cultural identity and knowledge for First Nations People across Australia.

The SEQ Regional Plan 'Shaping SEQ 2023' by the Queensland Government has a brief to:

"Empower Traditional Owners by recognising their Native Title rights, knowledge and interests in land and resource management and actively provide information and involve Traditional Owners early and on an ongoing basis in decision-making processes."

The determination of the Jinibarra people in 2012 and Kabi Kabi people in 2024 as Native Title holders of their land is also an overdue acknowledgement of a deep cultural relationship and connection with their land...the first conservationists.



View of Glasshouse Mountains (Photograph by John Burrows)



Araucaria bidwillii, commonly known as the Bunya Pine (Photograph by John Burrows)

### Chapter 2 Early Days 1960s - 1970s Birth of the Conservation

## Movement in Queensland

Queensland's oldest conservation group is the National Parks Association of Queensland, established in 1930 to advocate for protection, expansion and management of national parks. By the beginning of the 1970s, the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Australian Littoral Society (precursor to the Australian Marine Conservation Society), Queensland Conservation Council the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (WPSQ – renamed Wildlife Australia) had all been set up to lobby governments on a growing number of environmental issues.

Locally, the Noosa Parks Development Association (today Noosa Parks Association) had been formed in 1962 and the Caloundra branch of WPSQ in 1963. These two groups combined forces with another group called the Cooloola Committee in the long-running campaign to save the Cooloola region from sand mining and development.

It is no coincidence that the growth of the conservation movement on the Sunshine Coast paralleled the beginning of the development push in the region.

#### Sand mining

It is hard to believe that mining sand for minerals had been carried on many Sunshine Coast beaches. As early as 1929, there was a proposal to mine a black sand deposit near Coolum. This failed to proceed but then, in the 1950s, new technology was being developed to manufacture alloys for aeroplanes and spacecraft that required hitherto unheard of minerals like ilmenite, monazite, rutile and zircon, all found in mineral sands on coastal beaches. In 1956 there was a proposal to lease beaches around Coolum to sand mining interests. Probably the Sunshine Coast's first environmental action group, the Save the Trees Campaign, was formed to lobby the State government against the mining proposal. Maroochy Shire Chairman David Low, who saw tourism as the future of the area, wrote a letter of objection and Coolum Beach Progress Association mounted a petition against the sand mining.

The Minister for Mines visited the area and commented that there were hardly any houses between Coolum and Noosa, that the trees would be replanted once mining was finished, so what was the problem? The election in 1957 of Palmwoods resident Frank Nicklin as Premier saved the day as he supported tourism rather than sand mining.



Cooloola sand patch (Photograph by John Burrows)



View of Coolum looking north along the coastline towards Noosa Heads, 1954. (Photograph: Picture Sunshine Coast - Sunshine Coast Council)

At various times applications were made to sand-mine beaches in Maroochy Shire. Lex Smith (Assistant Shire Clerk 1953 – 1983) recalled in a 1985 interview (available via the Heritage Library) that there were 15 – 20 cases that the Council opposed, saying:

"The Council didn't want the beaches or the sand dunes to be mined, and as a result, each time an application for sand mining permits was applied for the Council fought the case in the Mining Wardens Court in Gympie. And there were quite a number of cases fought. Could have been anything up to fifteen to twenty cases altogether. The result was that Council was successful and the mining didn't take place, and therefore the vegetation on them was retained."

Sand mining had already occurred on the foredunes between Teewah Village and the Noosa River. In 1963 an application was made to mine over 14,800 acres (600ha) of the Cooloola high dunes, including the magnificent Coloured Sands. In 1965 Titanium Mines were sand mining in the northern part of Cooloola. The long-running Cooloola conservation campaign was one of Queensland's first environmental battles. A token Cooloola National Park was gazetted in 1975 but the campaign continued for more than two decades to obtain protected status for a much larger area.

The Churinga Tree Walk group was established in 1969 to revegetate the Mooloolaba Spit and beaches from Pt Cartwright to Pt Arkwright at Coolum. Thousands of trees, mainly coastal banksias and casuarinas were planted along eroding beachfront in the 1970s. There were no native plant nurseries and they were propagated by seed, grown and planted by volunteers. The example of the Gold Coast which had flattened sand dunes for development and then had to spend massive amounts of money on rock walls loomed large in people's minds and slowly awareness of the importance of retaining and enhancing the dunes grew. In 1971 Hooker Mining P/L applied to mine 3 miles (4.8km) of the beach from Currimundi to Pt Cartwright for fill for nearby housing development. It was vigorously opposed by WPSQ Caloundra and some 1,000 signatures were obtained for a petition against the mining.

The Landsborough Shire Council also objected because they would bear the cost of restoration works. The application was deemed to have not been properly advertised for the required length of time and refused, but the company again applied to 'dredge' the same area. Fortunately, it did not go ahead. However, the bulldozing of the sand dunes at Pt Cartwright did go ahead sanctioned by the State government – not for sand mining but for fill for development.

A dramatic break-through of the sea in December 1972 caused a rethink and WPSQ Caloundra lobbied for protection of the area as an erosion-prone zone under the newly established Beach Protection Authority.



Mooloolaba Beach looking towards Pt Cartwright c1950s (Photograph: Picture Sunshine Coast - Sunshine Coast Council)

#### **Crown land leases**

The fate of large areas of the Sunshine Coast had effectively been sealed in the 1960s when Crown land leases were issued over most of the coastal strip by State government. These were a way to obtain infrastructure such as roads and bridges at no cost to government.

Crown land was allocated as Development Leases all along the coast from Sunshine Beach to Currimundi Lake and there was no consideration given to the conservation of flora and fauna or reserving land for recreation. Fighting for reserves on State controlled land would occupy the next decade of the 1980s and fully engage SCEC and its Member Groups from the north to the south of the Sunshine Coast region.

Other areas of Crown land on Bribie Island, in Landsborough shire and to the south in Caboolture had been planted with exotic pine trees and in 1979 these covered 15,000ha. Both the process of clear-felling the land and the modification of the environment resulted in a wasteland in terms of native flora and fauna. State forests in Noosa and Maroochy were being logged for native hardwood and some quarrying was also being permitted.

In 1979 a proposal to set up a \$300mill. pulp and woodchip mill at Beerburrum was being promoted by the Queensland government in conjunction with Australian Paper Mills and a Korean company. It would have been the largest unbleached Kraft process mill in Australia with significant effluent issue and odours as well as a huge demand for water. Strong lobbying by Caloundra WPSQ and a subsequent feasibility study led to the plan being abandoned.

> Right: Aerial view north towards Point Cartwright showing the Mooloolaba Boat Harbour, Spit and Kawana Waters canal development in May 1971 (Photograph: Picture Sunshine Coast - Sunshine Coast Council)

#### **Canal development**

Plans to develop the wildflower environment between the Mooloolah River and Currimundi into canal estates had already been decided by 1970. The Kathleen McArthur Conservation Park at the southern end, originally earmarked for a golf course, today preserves the only original remnant of these once wildflowercovered coastal plains and wetlands. (It was posthumously named in her honour in 2004 in recognition of the efforts of Kathleen and WPSQ Caloundra to save this small area from the massive urban development that followed and is still going in 2024.)

Applications for canal development on privately owned land started to proliferate during the 1970s. Henzells Agency put forward plans for a canal estate at Golden Beach that was to become the massive *Pelican Waters* development. In the early 1970s WPSQ was fully engaged in trying to stop this development and Kathleen McArthur even took the developers to Court to try to prevent it.



Above: The unspoilt wilderness of Pt Cartwright in the 1960s (Photographs: Picture Sunshine Coast - Sunshine Coast)



In Maroochy Shire construction of the *River Breeze* canal estate started in the early 1970s and plans were afoot for many more such developments on Maroochy River – one of which was to become an intensive conservation battle. The Sunshine Coast branch of the Australian Littoral Society led opposition to canal developments on the Maroochy River.

However, the fate of Hay's Island on the Noosa River, a Crown land lease, was sealed in 1972 when a proposed canal development was negotiated with government that would eventually become *Noosa Sound*. It was an environmental disaster to develop land in an estuary and costly mistakes were made with long term effects on the river mouth that has required decades of radical surgery (at public expense) to "fix".



Hays Island c.1960s before Noosa Sound was built (Photograph: Noosa Library Service Heritage Library)



Hays Island c1970s (Photograph: Noosa Library Service Heritage Library)

It is perhaps fortunate that lessons **were** being learned from these mistakes and that the State government was becoming concerned about the cost of liability and restitution. Other proposals for canal estates did not immediately come to fruition - by which time a better assessment framework had been developed - and community opposition was informed by conservation groups and others opposed to this developer-led proliferation.

#### **Coastal Management**

Scientific knowledge about the effects of canal development, removing sand from behind dunes, interfering with estuaries and other coastal management issues was very limited in the 1960s. There was virtually no legislation to guide the process of coastal management. The Mooloolaba rock walls were built to stabilise the river mouth for boating and to improve the sale-ability of canal estate blocks in 1968 with little consideration of the natural environment and of course no computer modelling back then. The fact that the river mouth had been stabilised so early made Mooloolaba the harbour of the Sunshine Coast.

In 1965 there was a **community** proposal to build two rock groynes at the northern entrance of Pumicestone Passage for a boat harbour. An estimated 120 acres (48.5ha) was to be reclaimed by dredging and filling operations in one of the most productive fish breeding habitats in South East Queensland. So enthusiastic were the proponents that they raised one thousand pounds towards the cost of scientific modelling. The models were built through the Civil Engineering Department of Queensland University and financed by State government, the Caloundra City Council, Queensland University and private donations. It took from August 1966 to late 1971 to build and test two models that reproduced tidal flows. The results resoundingly showed that a practical solution to stabilising the bar was not possible.

Nonetheless there was later another unsuccessful attempt by a private developer in 1981 to build a marina – complete with rock walls and Polynesian style resort on 15ha of dredged sand. WPSQ Caloundra was kept busy objecting to vet another (eventually unsuccessful) proposal in 1984 which involved construction of training walls and a 370m long groyne.

With a State government that wanted to develop everything and bureaucrats who were getting nervous about the long term effects and liability, a massive data collecting exercise was undertaken by Gutteridge Haskins and Davey for the Co-ordinator General's Department. It resulted in the 4 volume Coastal Management Study covering from the Tweed River to the northern boundary of Noosa Shire - released to the public in January 1976. It did not make a lot of difference to the State government of the day and was "advisory" in nature, but the information collected was of enormous importance. It was like a green Bible to the conservation movement providing scientific assessment of remaining conservation areas and condemnation for the lack of management and setting aside public land along the ocean and waterways.

Rock groynes were built on almost all river mouths in NSW for fishing boats and it looked like every river could expect the same treatment. In 1979 a House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Conservation held a Coastal Management Enquiry. It took submissions and heard evidence in all states and the ACT. The evidence covered 11 volumes.

The Committee's report with findings and recommendations was completed in March 1980. The Queensland government boycotted the inquiry and it was left mainly to the conservation movement to make submissions.

#### **High Rise**

Plans for the first high rise building north of Brisbane in Hastings Street Noosa attracted vigorous opposition from the community and conservationist Marjorie Harrold took the case to court, losing with costs awarded **against** her. The developer actually became wary of the effects of significant erosion on the beach and withdrew. 1972 was the beginning of **some** town planning to protect the area from other applications for high rise and subsequently later decisions have made Noosa stand out from the rest of the Sunshine Coast area as environmentally conscious.

The vision was somewhat different in Maroochy Shire where the high rise was allowed from Coolum to Mudjimba. Although Surf Air had opened in 1971, further high rise development did not follow at this time. In Caloundra the Westaway Towers opened in 1974 and successive Councils have sanctioned many more such buildings in the area. High rise become an election issue in the 1980s.



Right: Surfair vans in front of the Surfair International Hotel, David Low Way, Marcoola, August 1980 (Photograph: Picture Sunshine Coast - Sunshine Coast)



The photograph says it all-Gateway to Progress! Opening of part of the (now) David Low Way 1961 (Photograph: Picture Sunshine Coast - Sunshine Coast Council)

#### **National Parks**

By the time the Sunshine Coast conservation movement started to gain momentum at the end of the 1970s, there were only four national parks in existence in the Sunshine Coast region. The oldest was a small national park in the Conondale Ranges - little known and visited only by foresters and bush walkers. There was a reserve of 232ha (573ac) at Noosa Heads. Another 75ha (185ac) protected area at Kondalilla had become a national park in 1945 and 26ha (64ac) at Mapleton Falls became a national park in 1973. A total area of around 400ha (988ac) was in protected status.

An area of 108ha (266ac) of Crown land south of Mount Coolum had been declared a national park in 1949 but was then revoked in 1959 for development of the airport. When this happened the National Parks Association of Queensland lobbied government to obtain some land fronting the Mooloolah River. This small area was expanded in 1960 to 675ha (1,669ac) to include more wildflower habitat and has formed the basis of the Mooloolah River National Park (in 2024) with an area of 1,676ha (4,141ac).

All of these areas have been targeted by conservation groups and with a lot of determined effort they have been progressively enlarged over several decades, which will be outlined in more detail later. The sad fact is that the State government's Development Leases had effectively compromised future national parks on the coast unless compensation was paid. There was virtually no recognition of the unique value of the natural environment of the Sunshine Coast in this era.

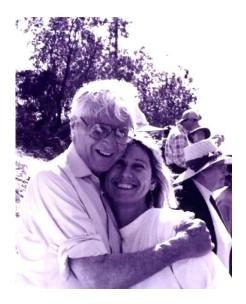
This did change slowly with the influence of conservationists and by 1985 there were Environment Parks at Currimundi Lake of 43ha (106ac); Caloundra Road of 9ha (22ac); the Peregian Environment Park of 93ha (229ac); Eudlo Creek of 26ha (64ac) with a second Environment Park at Eudlo Creek of 73ha (180ac) and 81ha (200ac) at Coolum. In Noosa there were Environmental Parks at Lake Weyba of 149ha (368ac); Lake Cooroibah of 13ha (32ac); Sheep Island of 6ha (14ac) and 196ha (484ac) on Noosa North Shore.

A 1985 inventory lists 698ha (1,724ac) at the Glasshouse Mountains and 138ha (341ac) of "Railway" National Park as the only National Parks in the Landsborough Shire. In Maroochy Shire the hinterland national parks had slightly expanded with Obi Obi Gorge of 80ha (197ac), Tuckers Creek of 53ha (130ac) and Fern Tree Creek of 20ha (49ac), while Kondalilla National Park was the same size. At the Conondale Ranges, the National Park covered 675ha (1,667ac).

The biggest jewel in the crown was undoubtedly the Cooloola National Park which covered 39,400ha (97,359ac). Noosa Heads was 432ha (1,067ac) and a new National Park protected 469ha (1,158ac) of Noosa Riverfront and a small area of 23ha (56ac) at Mt Pinbarren.

The remaining areas of Crown Land along the coast became the focus of great effort during the 1980s, through the 1990s and even into the 2000s.

These were protracted campaigns to protect what was left of essentially public land for the people and for nature.



Dr Arthur Harrold from Noosa Parks Association and Karen Robinson from SCEC worked together to produce the first maps in the 1980s for what was to become the Noosa to Coolum greenbelt linking conservation areas.



Tawny Frogmouths (Photograph by John Burrows)

#### **Nuclear power**

In 1969 a 500MW nuclear power plant had been proposed for Jervis Bay, NSW, which was to be the first of 20 atomic plants to be built in Australia over 20 years. By 1971 a decision NOT to go ahead was made on economic grounds.

Nonetheless the Bjelke Petersen government in Queensland was making plans for a nuclear enrichment plant at Caboolture in 1972 - to cash in on the demand for enriched uranium in France and the U.S.

A number of local authorities throughout Australia declared nuclear-free zones and pressure was applied to Sunshine Coast Councils to do the same in the 1980s. Only Noosa Council is on record as having become a nuclear free zone.

The 1980s were a time when a generation in Australia campaigned actively for world peace, nuclear disarmament, and an end to uranium mining and export – an ambitious political agenda.



Debate about French nuclear testing in the Pacific led to the formation of CANE (Campaign Against Nuclear Energy), several Friends of the Earth groups and the ACF (Australian Conservation Foundation) was vocal in its opposition to uranium mining and a nuclear industry for Australia. Concerns about the legacy of British testing in South Australia grew and the anti-nuclear stance was a major environmental issue in the next decade with huge marches and rallies being held.

The Campaign Against Nuclear Power, Sunshine Coast and Caboolture branches, and Move for Peace were among the first Member Groups of SCEC. The so-called *Peace movement* was an integral part of what were considered conservation issues from the early days. Fresh 'living' food and a clean environment were an important part of what could loosely be called this alternative philosophy, which had direct links with the peace movement.

The bombing of the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior in 1985 and the horrific nuclear explosion at Chernobyl in 1986 swelled support around the world for peace and disarmament anti-nuclear groups.



Photographs above and below- representational of Peace Protests against Nuclear Power (Date Unknown)



#### World Environment Day

In 1972 the first major conference on global environmental issues was convened by the United Nations and held from 5 June – 16 June in Stockholm, Sweden. On 15<sup>th</sup> December of the same year, the General Assembly had adopted a resolution to declare 5<sup>th</sup> June as World Environment Day and in 1973 the first World Environment Day was celebrated to raise awareness of issues such as depletion of the ozone layer of the earth, global warming, growing desertification and toxic chemicals.

On the Sunshine Coast Barbara and Alex Hansa, proprietors of Fairhill Nursery, hosted the first World Environment Day (WED) Festival in 1978 in the grounds of their native plant nursery at Yandina. It was a real family affair with involvement by schools, the Nambour Education Resource Centre and lots of our young children. It was coordinated by a committee, which included people who later became part of SCEC, and the nursery was an early meeting place for the group that was to become SCEC. These festivals were a great force in bringing together like-minded people and raising awareness of environmental issues, providing the nucleus for growth of the conservation movement on the Sunshine Coast.



Barbara Hansa pioneered native plant growing at Fairhill Native plant Nursery from 1975 and was instrumental in starting the Sunshine Coast's first World Environment Day Festival at Fairhill in 1978

Early conservationists recall that many informal meetings were held at the Fairhill native plant nursery.

A retrospective *Eco Echo* article by Jillian Rossiter describes the scene:

"...many of the early Sunshine Coast conservationists of the 70s 'wore many hats'; belonged to several organisations. In fact, they were seeing the same faces at the meetings so often that an idea to combine forces arose. Same faces but different times and different venues, said Julie Johnson. The strength of working together/combining forces to form an umbrella group was the catalyst for this early amalgamation to fight for the Conondales, the wildflower reserve at Marcoola, to protect Maroochy/Mooloolah River systems from massive canal estates on floodplains and for nuclear disarmament."

#### The Conondales

Mark Ricketts was one of those who wore two hats in his role as SCEC Project Officer and major campaigner for the Conondale Range Committee (CRC) after Richard Giles. It was an issue that the media sensationalised as logging vs conservation. The CRC was from its inception however a science-based group and had based its numerous submissions on the fact that the Conondale area was the most significant and largest area containing endemic and endangered species of fauna and flora on the western boundary of Maroochy Shire.

An old gold mine was re-opened that SCEC and CRC relentlessly opposed and which ended up leaving a toxic legacy that was "cleaned up" at public expense after further lobbying.

The failure of government to hold a bond sufficiently large to cover the costs of a cleanup and further lobbying eventually led to vast improvements for all of Queensland with greatly increased security bonds, increases in staff to monitor activities and progressive rehabilitation rather than at the end of the life of a mine.

The government set up a consultative committee to negotiate the boundaries for an enlarged national park between conservationists and the timber industry.

A major gain was achieved in 1992 when years of lobbying paid off. More than 7,000ha (17,297ac) plus a Scientific Area at Booloumba gorge of 1,049ha (2,592ac) and 300ha (741ac) of protected areas at Summer Creek and the Bluffs were announced as part of the national park. Gazettal took a further three years but with a sting...Beekeepers were still allowed in "resource areas".

In a nice twist, in 2013, using cutting edge GIS technology, Queensland's tallest tree, a Flooded Gum (Eucalyptus Grandis) was discovered in the Conondale National Park, which had somehow been missed by loggers for over 150 years. Named Big Bob (after then Noosa Council Mayor Bob Abbot) it stands at 73 metres (229 feet) high, around the same height as a 21-story building.



Rainforest in the Conondales (Photograph by John Burrows)



Above: "Big Bob"-Queensland's Tallest Tree found in Conondale National Park in 2013

Right: Sunshine Coast mayor Bob Abbott and Alicia Stumm from Esri hold up a photograph of the giant eucalypt known as Big Bob. (photograph from '*Big Bob Stands Tall as an Australian Environmental Icon*' By Alicia Stumm, Esri Australia Pty. Ltd. www.esri.com) Growth, growth, growth

From a population base of just under 34,000 permanent residents in 1961, by 1971 there were more than 50,000. During the decade from 1970 to 1980 the growth rate on the Sunshine Coast actually surpassed that of the Gold Coast.

In 1981 the combined population of Noosa, Maroochy and Noosa Shires was just over 100,000. The population had doubled with around half of it in the Maroochy Shire. Most of the development was on the coast but farmers were starting to cash in on the demand for larger rural blocks as traditional agricultural pursuits declined and rural residential estates started to spread out on the inland landscapes.

It was into this situation, with a seemingly gung-ho attitude to development going ahead at any cost, with no consideration for the natural environment, that groups on the Sunshine Coast started to meet together as the decade of 1980s and a new era for the environment began...



### Chapter 3 World Environment Day (WED) Festival

As previously mentioned, one of the ways people got together and raised awareness of environmental issues was through festivals, such as World Environment Day...

#### 1978 – 1983

Festivals to celebrate World Environment Day had started on the Sunshine Coast in 1978. They were held at the Fairhill Nursery near Yandina initiated by Barbara and Alex Hansa. It was coordinated by a committee which included people who later became part of SCEC.

The WED Festival has since become a signature event for SCEC and its member groups and has been celebrated on the Sunshine Coast (in 2024) for an amazing 46 years. This is how it all began and how it has evolved.

Every year attendances increased at Fairhill and in 1982 the last festival was held there. Councillor Jim Cash was the official opener and Barbara Hansa the Coordinator. The ambitious three-day program for World Environment Week 1982 included a film and slide night in the old Plaza Theatre in Currie Street, Nambour with a documentary - appropriately titled *Say Goodbye* - on Endangered Species. There was a dance at Yandina School of Arts on the Friday night and the Festival at Fairhill on Saturday with music and bush songs around a campfire in the evening.

In 1983 the Festival moved to Petrie Creek Park in Nambour. The minutes show that - *It was* moved Paul O'Donnell and seconded by Karen Robinson that "Barbara Hansa be Coordinator of Environment Day and that she form a congenial committee. Carried!

The Festival at Petrie Creek proved to be a stop gap measure and plans were made to move to an even larger venue on the coast.

## The WED Festival moves to Cotton Tree

The WED Festival was subsequently held at Cotton Tree from 1984 until 2004. It brought together thousands of people – many of whom would look forward to catching up with old friends each year and also provided member groups with fundraising and promotional opportunities – as well as highlighting the environmental issues of the times.

A feature of the festivals at Cotton Tree in the early days was the Kawana Caloundra Wastebusters washing up tent which collected, washed and distributed for re-use cups, plates and bowls to reduce disposable waste. Many dedicated volunteers worked there.



Wendy Lyons (left) and Anne Wensley (right) from Kawana Caloundra Wastebusters washing up

At the first Festival in 1984, 200 Cotton Trees, Melaleucas and Swamp Oaks were planted. Poet and Indigenous activist Oojeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker) opened the Festival. Sunshine Coast residents Judith Durham of The Seekers fame and her husband, musician Ron Edgeworth, performed a number of original songs specially written to commemorate World Environment Day. Feet were tapping along with the popular local Blowfly Bush Band; the Jazz Action Society added to the ambience; the Mandala Dancers displayed traditional folk dances and a Tai Chi performance was also enjoyed, which was then quite a novelty.

An estimated 3,000 people attended the first Festival at Cotton Tree. There were 30 stalls with 22 community groups. The theme was *Keep the Sunshine Coast Clean and Green*.

Publicity was by way of hand-drawn posters, photocopied in black and white, sometimes on coloured paper if the budget ran to it, and children were encouraged to colour in the posters which went on noticeboards all around the region.

#### The 1980s

By 1985 the *Sunshine Coast Daily* had come on board with a 4-page advertising spread featuring editorial on the Festival and conservation issues, and attendances further increased. However, some Maroochy Shire Councillors made negative remarks about the Festival, including a perceived political bias and its future at Cotton Tree was uncertain for a time. A list of member groups was requested by Council and at this stage SCEC was still in the process of becoming incorporated.

Correspondence from SCEC to two Maroochy Shire Councillors, dated 15 June 1985 after the second Cotton Tree Festival was held are reproduced below:

#### "Dear Mr (Cr) King,

With reference to your remark re World Environment Day Festival in Council on Tuesday 11/6/85 we would like to point out that at the WED Festival at Petrie Park 1983, Mr Gordon Simpson not only had a stall for the National Party but also gave an address that was well heard by everyone attending the Festival.

All political groups are welcome to have a stall to promote their policies on the environment at the World Environment Day festival as is their democratic right in this country.

Yours sincerely

Ganga Hawkins, Coordinator, WED Festival"

#### "Dear Mr (Cr) Birrell

With reference to your remarks in Council last Tuesday 11/6/85 we would like to point out that the area we used for World Environment Day Festival is that which is set aside for such functions. The annual Christmas Funfair is held in the same area for several week.

Some estimates of up to 2,000 of the 'public' attended the WED Festival. Yours sincerely

Ganga Hawkins, Coordinator, WED Festival"

The 1986 Festival celebrated the International Year of Peace with (then) Dr Ian Lowe speaking to highlight peace and disarmament issues. The official theme was Wetlands with the slogan *They're not just for the birds* and WPSQ Director Don Henry spoke about their importance, as well as the need to increase the number of Queensland's National Parks. Noel Gardner and Mark Gillett first performed and became a fixture at subsequent Festivals with their signature songs about environmental issues.



Recycled fashion on display

In 1987 the Festival was held at Lions Park in Noosa to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of SCEC member group Noosa Parks Association. It took the form of an environmental expo.

By 1988 the Greenhouse Effect and Ozone layer depletion were grabbing headlines. The environment was being seriously discussed in the media and people were hungry for information. Maleny *Waste Busters* came on board to minimise and recycle waste and attendances continued to grow.

The raised native gardens on the east and west of the park were planted at the festival with financial assistance from Cr Charmaine Foley in 1989.

### WED Mural at Cotton Tree June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1992

1992 was declared the Year of the River in Maroochy Shire and an ambitious project was undertaken by SCEC with the support (just!) of Maroochy Shire Council to paint a mural depicting the history of the Maroochy River as part of the WED Festival. The idea was to have both indigenous and non-indigenous artists working together and the project was undertaken with permission from the Kabi Kabi Aboriginal Corporation.

Three of the artists, Joanne Currie, Kaeleen Hunter and Elli Schlunke worked together to come up with the concept. Blair MacNamara, Vicki Turner and others assisted in the painting. It was decided that the Maroochy River would wind along the length of the wall, with the Rainbow Serpent intertwined with the river, acknowledging its primary role in creation. The two heads of the river were shaped like swan's heads, representing the role of the black swan in the legend of the river's formation. Scenes depicted included Before Europeans, The Invasion, The Present Day and The Future with the land healed, black and white people caring for the land together. This tied in with the United Nations theme for the year One Earth -Caring and Sharing.

Unfortunately, the mural was later vandalised but was subsequently repainted by the artists. Sadly in 2024 the mural was painted over, with a new mural advertising a trial of Containers for Change by the Sunshine Coast Regional Council. Forty public bins in the park provide facilities to recycle eligible containers and the Rainbow Serpent mural has become part of history consigned to memory.



Artists Kaeleen Hunter (right) and Ellie Schlunke (left)



Artist Joanne Currie



The mural formed a backdrop to the stage for many years at Cotton Tree

#### The 1990s

In the 1990s Des Ritchie brought hand drawn flowcharts to oversee the organisation of the Festival as Coordinator and Susie Chapman also brought a new dimension and energy. Susie introduced the Water Tent to bring under one roof community and government groups working on water-related issues; the Bike Rally to encourage sustainable transport and the amazing recycled Raft Regatta that raced from the bridge on Cornmeal Creek to the Festival site.

The last Festival in the old millennium in 1999 demonstrated how far it had come with an absolute feast of music with 2 stages and 10 bands. Maroochy Shire Mayor Don Culley came along to present the RADF awards and there was a large Children's Festival area.



Recycled Raft Regatta 1993



Maroochy Mayor Don Culley arrives sustainably at the WED Festival 1997



Caloundra WPSQ tent at World Environment Day

Bev Hand provided an Indigenous welcome and continued to do so for many years. Councillors like Charmaine English/Foley, Joe Natoli and Barbara Cansdell spoke at the Festival, which had gained a great degree of community acceptance.



Kabi Kabi Traditional Custodian (Aunty) Bev Hand speaking, and Cr Barbara Cansdell (seated left) and Alison Joy Smith (right)

To give an idea of the complexity of organising such a large event, here is a list of key areas of responsibility for 1996: planning, publicity, sponsorships, ordering supplies, construction, special events, SCEC tent, bar, food, signs, amusements and kids activities, stage set up and management, entertainment program, site supervision, school involvement, raffles, waste management, washing up and the allimportant treasury – just to mention a few. It was SCEC's largest and most profitable fundraiser of the year, requiring many hundreds of volunteer hours.

The Festival was completely run by volunteers and a group effort with Karen Robinson, Ganga Hawkins and Elaine Green acknowledged as overall coordinators during the 1980s and 1990s. Other listed as key coordinators were Annette Schoenberger, Alison Joy Smith, Des Ritchie, Susie Chapman, Stuart Ransom, Phil Gordon, Lyn Dickinson, Noela Thompson, Christopher Dean, Ljuba Djordjevic, Hanni Ellerbock, Paul Willett, but unfortunately the written records of the time are not expansive. Apologies to those omitted.

#### **Highlights of the 2000s**

In an inauspicious start to the new millennium, the 2000 event was cancelled due to heavy rainfall.

Nonetheless coordinator Alison Joy Smith took it on again in 2001 and 2002. Jenifer St George was employed by SCEC as Marketing Manager. A crowd of around 6,000 attended in 2001 and 500 native trees were given away. It was the *International Year of Volunteers* and State MP for Nicklin, Peter Wellington, was the official opener. Posters were now in full colour!

Coordinator LB Joum introduced some new concepts in 2003, including the Aboriginal and Islander Heritage Tent with traditional and contemporary arts and crafts and activities, plus the *New Ground Sound* solar-powered tepee featuring electronic music and a chill zone.

A real sign of how far the environment had come as a political issue was the attendance of not one but two State MPs, Dean Wells and Merri Rose. Public liability and the cost of coverage had however become a real issue that threatened many community events. The Festival was held in conjunction with the Maroochy Mooloolah Catchment Coordinating Association, which allowed insurance coverage under Landcare.

There was now serious discussion about whether SCEC should continue to host the WED Festival due to the massive effort it took to stage the event. However, in 2004 a \$10,000 sponsorship package from Toyota, that led to a re-naming - the Toyota Prius World Environment Day - saved the day, showcasing one of the first hybrid fuel efficient cars.

Coordinator was Yvette Nirvana and a highlight was the launch of *Splash!* co-ordinated by Susie Chapman, which involved a raft, printed with the footprints of a frog, that was passed from the stage to the water's edge by the audience forming a human chain. The launch of the raft was accompanied by drumming from the stage, signalling the start of a wonderful parade of children in costumes around the Festival site.

The washing-up tent continued the tradition of re-use and since its inception Ivan Mabb (Enviroflo Solar) had provided hot water heated on site by the sun.

Presented by ΤΟΥΟΤΑ RIUS KU Festival 2004 Free entry Childrens activiti TOYOTA onmental displation ood stalls MIX pes, catch a bus, this celebration of SUSTAINA ong to c pre information please call 5441 5747 om 9am to 5pm

#### Changes!

The Cotton Tree site was not available in 2005 and a new venue had to be found. The site chosen was the Eumundi Amphitheatre adjacent to the Eumundi Markets.

The stage was the centrepiece with seating on the grassy slope, performances by old favourites like Barry Charles on the program along with the Big Marimba, Michelle Brown, Ton Clooney, Diva D, Gossamer Gia and Sanseriff. It was coordinated by Elaine Green and Jamie Quarrell.

In 2006 the venue was again at Eumundi. This was the first time a Speakers' Forum was held in its own venue. Topics included depleted uranium- an emerging health legacy from the 2004-05 Gulf War, *Dumb Dams and Smart Solutions*, and other issues under the thematic banner of Using Resources Wisely.

However, the site was not without its logistical challenges and the following year another major break with tradition followed.

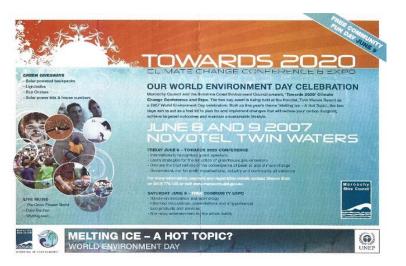




Maroochy River Sunrise (Photograph by John Burrows)

#### Looking Towards the Future...

In 2007 WED was celebrated as a two-day event that included a conference and a community expo called Toward 2020 Climate Change Expo hosted by SCEC in conjunction with Maroochy Shire Council. It was held at the Twin Waters Resort and coordinated by Karen Robinson (SCEC) and Sharon Stott (Council). It was opened by then Mayor Joe Natoli and Prof. Ian Lowe provided a thoughtful keynote address titled Positive Responses to Climate Prof. Ian Lowe facilitated a Change. "hypothetical" on climate change scenarios by putting politicians and experts in the hotspot. An exhibition on sustainable living provided more food for thought.



#### WED goes to University

In another major change in 2008, a partnership between SCEC, the University of the Sunshine Coast and Sunshine Coast Regional Council, supported by SEQ Catchments, brought the WED Festival site to the Sippy Downs University campus in 2008.

However, the best laid plans... The event had to be postponed due to heavy rain but was held a month later. Coordinator was Diana Dummett, with Jen Mazoudier, Phil Roslan and Stuart Ransom, and the theme was *Small Footprints Big Steps: Our Region's Future.* The largely undercover site featured a Farmers' Market, Transition Town and Green Business exhibits with talks in two lecture theatres.

A forum explored how to implement sustainability on the Sunshine Coast with Mayor Bob Abbott leading the discussion.



Pictures of WED Festival at the Sunshine Coast University Sippy Downs Campus













The outdoor stage area was smaller in 2008, but by the following year, 2009, as the partnership continued, it moved to a larger more open area. The venue offered a myriad of possibilities in terms of space and shelter that had never been previously available.

A month of celebrations in June was held for the first time, starting with the new Sunshine Coast Regional Council's *Living Smart "Glossies" Awards* and spread across the region to culminate in the WED Festival. The budget was now big bickies, around \$50,000, and the paid Coordinator was Helen Langlois.

It was a huge culture shift for SCEC from the WED Festival being a largely volunteer effort with decisions made on the fly to a three-way formal Steering Committee with paid professionals, and the partnership required extensive communication and nurturing. However, it was paying great dividends in terms of developing the event and raising awareness of environmental issues. More space allowed for expansion of themed areas and art installations. The undercover venues reduced the threat of rain and the Festival was reaching a wider audience due to the partnership. As the 2010 festival approached, SCEC wrote to the partners seeking underwriting as the projected budget showed a deficit. The cost of contracting a professional marketing company, for instance, was \$9,000 for 42 hours of effort - aimed at raising further sponsorships.

Nonetheless a great calendar of events for Green June was run and public education continued with a *Low CO2* exhibition along with the *Green Biz Expo* and community information stalls. The *Eco Flicks* were run for the first time.

The WED Festival for 2011 was billed as a *Festival of ideas*. A new format was introduced with themed areas focussing on topics such as energy, transport and food with a great Speakers' Program. The professional marketing report indicated there were 116 exhibitors, 22 presentations, 54 stories across print, radio and TV media, over 5,000 views on the Festival website and an estimated attendance of 8,000 people.

The 2012 event was recognised internationally by the United Nations Environmental program (UNEP) in the *WED 2012 Challenge* finishing in the top five out of over 10,000 entries.

The slogan was *Your Gateway to the Green Economy* and a green marketplace featured 40 local businesses demonstrating sustainable practices. A further 80 exhibitors from the community and public sector provided a wide array of information and connections for people wanting to be involved in caring for the environment. Themed areas were food, water, transport, home and garden, energy, with two new areas to highlight sustainable fashion and lifestyle and waste management.

The WED Festival was certainly coming of age as the 2013 event celebrated 35 years since the first WED Festival on the Sunshine Coast. Every year the organisers knocked themselves out to get the best of environmental innovation and new sustainable technology involved in the Festival and to reach a diverse audience that included well organised and educative activities for children. By 2015 the benefits of the partnership had matured the event by working with professional marketing companies, the development of a WED logo and brand and the use of Facebook and the SCEC website as the main forms of year-round communication. However, in 2015 the seven-year partnership also came to an end and the WED Festival returned to Cotton Tree.

#### **Back to Cotton Tree**

The 2016 WED Festival returned to the beautiful shores of the Maroochy River estuary at Cotton Tree but in a new location that allowed the expanded format to continue with a renewables expo and 57 community stalls. It stretched to encompass the children's playgrounds as part of the Children's Forest. A wonderful highlight was the bar on a jetty reaching out over the water. Nearby there were live contemporary street art activities. The Sunshine Coast Regional Council ran a Workshop Yurt and Noosa Council sponsored a Speakers' Dome.

Coordinator Leah Hays had quickly realised the limitations of power to the site and thus the Solar Sunflower made its debut. This was a solar powered generator developed by the Southern Cross University that featured what was then cutting edge technology with lithium battery storage.

The 2017, 2018 and 2019 Festivals (coordinated by Natalie Frost) refined the layout and attracted 75 stalls plus the renewables expo and around 8,000 people attended.

In a testament to the event and to SCEC as its organiser, the 2017 WED Festival was the Queensland winner of the Australian Event Award for Best Charity or Cause-Related event, as well as being a national finalist.



WED Coordinator Leah Hays and SCEC Campaigner Narelle McCarthy accept the Award

The sustainability of the WED Festival was again being discussed as it took an inordinate amount of time to coordinate, including the ability to attract enough volunteers to work there. The Festival had always made an extra effort with waste and by this time all food and drink outlets used recyclable materials and onsite waste was fully sorted.

The community had embraced the return of the Festival to Cotton Tree but the last festival held there was celebrated in 2019 with no knowledge of what was to come in 2020...

#### 2020 and Beyond

Faced with the COVID-19 pandemic, the future of World Environment Day (WED) was in question. Rather than cancelling due to the public health directives, SCEC opted to reimagine the event into a weekend long online event. Videos were submitted from member groups and a live stream set up from a dedicated recording studio at the University of the Sunshine (USC). The online event included live and pre-recorded performances from local bands, community groups, expert panel discussions and demonstrations. The USC studio featured an installation by artist and dedicated SCEC volunteer Rose Feely which showcased the diversity of local flora.

The event began on Friday, 5 June at 12 pm with a live stream featuring the launch of author Sarah Pye's new book, 'Saving Sun Bears' hosted by *ABC Mornings* Annie Gaffney.

SCEC Campaigner Narelle McCarthy did a fabulous job of hosting the remainder of the afternoon's program, which featured member group spotlights and the announcement of the Queensland Conservation Council's photography competition winners. The Sunday live stream was the highlight of the festival with Channel 7 Presenter Rosanna Natoli as the MC for the day.



The event wasn't without its complications however. As this was the first time SCEC had run an event like this, there were plenty of technical challenges to overcome and a steep learning curve with only 7 weeks to plan the event.

A Renewables Expo coordinated by Sunshine Coast Climate Action Now (SCCAN) showcased local companies including tiny houses, boats, scooters, bikes and more. The content was showcased on the WED website and reached over 100,000 people. As COVID-19 continued to impact the operational capability of World Environment Day Festival in 2021, a subcommittee from the SCEC Management Committee was formed to evaluate the options. After discussions and review, it was decided to deliver the Festival as a month-long program of events and activities with Member Groups rather than a large one day event. The delivery of the 2021 festival was designed to be an event that reduced financial and resourcing risks, whilst still offering an engaging and immersive program.

The events were curated around the theme based on the United Nations decade of *Ecosystem Restoration* that was launched on World Environment Day (June 5th). Given that the SCEC member groups are primarily landbased restoration community groups, their regular activities and events aligned well.

There were 43 separate events delivered, 1500 trees planted across multiple sites, 26kgs of litter collected from Caloundra beaches and 25 ecosystem restoration projects, showcasing 18 community groups. The evolution of the WED Festival to this format meant it was engaging with a new, diverse and much wider audience. The 2021 Festival was awarded the Queensland Landcare Award.



Natalie Frost and Joanne Khonke

Following the success of the 2021 month long program of events, the 2022 Festival followed the same format.

After evaluating key learnings from the new format with SCEC Member Groups, the Festival was refined to a smaller program to allow ease of management.

The theme was *Only One Earth* and the program had a range of events that called for action for nature, climate and pollution, showcasing practical initiatives to protect our ecosystems.

This concept of having the WED Festival Day spread over a month and having Member Groups provide activities in their specific locations was a major innovation and is seen as the way forward, as it embraces the concept of member group empowerment and engagement with the public, whilst raising awareness of the array of environmental issues facing the region. Importantly, after more than 4 decades, SCEC's Sunshine Coast World Environment Day Festival is still being celebrated.





### Chapter 4 Formation of SCEC

Let's step back in time however, to the 1980s and to the official formation of SCEC....

#### 1980 – 1984

On the **23<sup>rd</sup> of March 1980** a meeting in the grounds of the Maroochydore Library was held with representatives of 12 conservation-based groups from across the Sunshine Coast. Present were:

Arthur Harrold of the Cooloola Committee;

Stan Tutt, Wildlife Preservation Society (WPSQ) of Queensland Caloundra branch;

Jim Fearnley, Noosa Parks Association;

Lutz and Heather Peterson (or Harford), Len Ernst and Mick Caplin, representing the Save Conondale Range Committee;

Noel Playford from the Noosa River Protection Committee;

Brian Jeffrey from Sunshine Coast Bushwalkers;

Edgar Dart, Betsan Coats and Constance

Perkins from Churinga Tree Walk Committee; Keith Clark and Betty Adams from Mooloolaba and Adjacent Areas Residents and Ratepayers Association;

Helen Kershaw, Julie Johnson and Jim Cash from the Sunshine Coast branch of Australian Littoral Society (ALS);

Barbara Hansa from the Committee for World Environment Day; Margaretann Stannard, Sunshine Coast Campaign for Alternatives to Nuclear Power; Brian Horn, Caboolture branch of Campaign Against Nuclear Power.

The agenda was to discuss formation of a regional conservation group under the umbrella of the State-based Queensland Conservation Council (QCC). Therese Clarke, Liz Bourne, Bruce Cummings, Bob Hoey, Wendy Auton and John McCabe represented the Queensland Conservation Council.

Despite John McCabe, QCC Chairperson, warning of the enormous administrative burden associated with setting up and running a regional conservation council, those present agreed to undertake the enormous task.

A motion was moved by Stan Tutt and seconded by Margaretann Stannard:

"That 3-monthly meetings of representatives of conservation groups and groups of concerned residents of the Sunshine Coast be held to discuss environmental issues of local importance."

Suggestions were made that such a group could be called the Sunshine Coast Regional Action Group (SCRAG) or Sunshine Coast Environment Group (SCEG). A date was set to hold the formation meeting in one month.

At the next meeting on **21<sup>st</sup> April, 1980**, it was moved by Julie Johnson and seconded by Barbara Hansa:

"That this group of representatives from groups concerned about the environment be called the Sunshine Coast Environment Council (SCEC)."

The motion was carried and thus SCEC came into existence.

Those present at the formation meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> April, 1980, included Jim Cash, Julie Johnson, Helen Kershaw, Mick Capelin, Barbara Hansa, Betsan Coates, Stan Tutt and Jim Fearnley.

It took a further two and a half years for SCEC to adopt a Constitution and the date for the first AGM was set for  $26^{th}$  February, 1983.

The Minutes of 28<sup>th</sup> July 1984 record a motion to incorporate, but this then took a few years. Back in those times a lot of groups were unincorporated – hence the use of terms like Committee and Society. SCEC was even able to obtain grants back then without being incorporated. However, it did mean that members could be personally liable in the event of any financial disaster and in the political climate of the times, this made people nervous.

In June 1988 with the adoption of the Model Rules SCEC became SCEC Inc. (Incorporated) and the date on the certificate of incorporation is 22 December 1987.

Keith Clarke is credited with the creation of the original slogan that went with the logo to identify SCEC: *Seeking to preserve the quality of life*. The SCEC logo was designed by Keith Clarke's daughter-in-law (sorry no name recorded!), who was a graphic design artist. It featured the natural elements of land, sea and air, with the sacred Bunya tree to acknowledge the Indigenous significance of the Sunshine Coast as the place of the great Bunya gatherings.



First Logo for SCEC circa 1980s

#### Member Groups in 1984

By 1984 SCEC had 21 member groups and mostly held its meetings at various locations around Nambour. There were usually 2 meetings per month – one for Business and one for Issues. SCEC was set up so that Member Groups are the voting members, with one vote per group at the AGM. Individual members do not have voting rights.

Some of these groups have gone and some continue to this day with new names and expanded memberships. They represented a plethora of community and conservation interests from Noosa to Caloundra. Caboolture was originally part of SCEC as well and Bribie Island was soon to come. A brief summary of the concerns of each of these original Member Group follows:

#### Australian Littoral Society – Sunshine Coast branch

The national Australian Littoral Society group was instrumental in saving coral reefs from mining for limestone from the early 1960s and in raising awareness that led to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park World Heritage Area. Its name was changed to the Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) in the 1990s and AMCS is still a SCEC Member Group.

The Sunshine Coast branch actively opposed canal development and was heavily involved in the successful campaign during the late 1970s and 1980 that stopped the *Marina Gardens* canal estate and eventually resulted in the Maroochy Wetlands Sanctuary in Bli Bli.

Founding member Jim Cash took on a role as an elected representative on Maroochy Shire Council in 1982 to further this and other environmental issues.

> Jim Cash-former Maroochy Shire Councillor and life member of SCEC



## Blackall Range Care & Protection Society

This group has evolved to become the Blackall Range Land Use and Planning Association which is still a SCEC Member Group. It was formed to protect and enhance the heritage, physical environment and productive economic base of the Blackall Range by influencing land use and town planning policies, practices and decisions.

#### Campaign Against Nuclear Power – Caboolture branch &

#### Campaign Against Nuclear Power – Sunshine Coast branch

These groups no longer exist but were a force in creating local activism against the nuclear industry and its expansion during the 1980s.



(Although quite possibly there will be a resurgence of local protest groups as a *deja vu* plan for nuclear power plants in Australia is being promoted by the Conservative Federal Opposition in 2024.)

#### **Churinga Tree Walk Committee**

Formed in 1969, the name *Churinga* means "a shaded walk at the meeting place of the waters". Their aim was the care of existing trees and ground cover and to plant as many trees as possible on the foreshore from Point Cartwright to Point Arkwright to reduce erosion by wind and wave action and provide shade and aesthetic appeal.

From 1969 – 1986, Churinga planted many thousands of trees, mainly she-oaks (*Casuarina Equisetifolia*) and coastal banksias (*Banksia Integrifolia*).

Parkland just south of The Corner at Alexandra Headland was named Churinga Park in 1974 by the Maroochy Shire Council in recognition of the efforts of the Churinga Tree Walk Committee.

## Save the Conondale Range Committee (SCRC)

The Save the Conondale Range Committee (SCRC) was formed in 1976, following a lot of scientific interest in frogs and threats to their habitat from logging in rainforest areas. A 1,740ha (4,299ac) national park was declared in 1977 which contained some rainforest areas, but it was really just a small section of the Sunshine Coast's richest forest biodiversity. Further lobbying by



Gary Lawler-Save the Conondale Range Committee.

SCRC for a larger area was ignored and in 1979, Forestry announced that it was going to build a new road and log the Booloumba Creek catchment which brought the issue to public attention. Enlarging protected areas in the Conondale Ranges was to become a long term campaign and today Conondale Range Conservation remains a SCEC Member Group.

#### **Cooloola Committee**

Formed in 1970, the Cooloola Committee worked with Noosa Parks Development Association and the Wildlife Preservation Society in the campaign to prevent sandmining in the Cooloola area for rutile and zircon. It was formed mainly to represent the campaign in Brisbane and to directly lobby politicians, which it did very successfully.



Coloured Sands, Cooloola (Photograph by John Burrows)

#### Landsborough Shire Action Group

Stan Tutt lived in Landsborough and was an original member of this community-based group that still exists as Landsborough Area Community Association and is still a SCEC Member group. It provides community support, assistance and facilities and lobbies for the interests of the area.

## Committee for World Environment Day

Barbara and Alex Hansa held the first celebrations for World Environment Day at their native plant nursery *Fairhill*, near Yandina, in 1978. It was held there until 1982 and many of the people who volunteered to help coordinate the events were early members of SCEC. It was instrumental in creating awareness about the natural environment and threats to it and brought together a wide range of people.

The Committee ceased to exist after SCEC took on the coordination in 1984.

#### **Cooroora Forests Association**

This group formed in 1982 in response to the clear-felling of native forests around Pomona. Unbelievable as it now sounds the forest were being completely cleared to plant exotic pine trees. Steve and Veronica Hall were dedicated members who organised rallies and worked constructively to try to influence Forestry policies and conducted educational walks and tree farming seminars. In 1986 they took on the issue of proposed wood chipping which was fortunately not allowed in Queensland. The group no longer exists but forestry policies have been significantly revised to include conservation issues.

#### **Maple Street Co-operative Society**

In 1979 this was one of the Sunshine Coast's first shopfronts promoting organic health food and natural remedies as an alternative to the "throw-away society", with an emphasis on recycling jars and bags and buying bulk items. Jill Jordan was a founding Director who became heavily involved in reducing waste and was elected to Caloundra City Council in 1991. The Co-op remains a SCEC Member Group and has survived with a shopfront in Maleny despite enormous competition.



Some early members outside Maple Street Co-op

#### MAARRA (Mooloolaba And Adjacent Ratepayers and Residents Association)

MAARA started in the 1980s to oppose high rise, in particular on Mooloolaba Spit and Beach. Two of its members Margaret Flaherty and Barbara Cansdell were later elected onto Maroochy Shire Council.

Today its work continues as Mooloolaba and The Spit Association which took over in the early 1990s.

#### **Noosa Parks Association (NPA)**

Formed in 1962 by Dr Arthur Harrold and a group of residents, NPA is the Sunshine Coast's oldest local conservation group. It is still extremely active and influential and a SCEC Member Group.

Over the decades NPA members have had a strong presence as elected representatives on Noosa Council and the group have made a huge contribution to the development and protection of Noosa's "green" image.



Cecily Fearnley and Arthur Harrold from NPA

#### Men of the Trees

This local group was part of a worldwide organisation promoting the teachings of Richard St. Barbe Baker to plant trees to prevent desertification, erosion and salinity. They planted thousands of trees on public and private property. Although there is no Sunshine Coast group today, the organisation continues its work in Queensland, Australia and globally and has made many more people aware of the enormous value of planting trees.

## Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and Plants (PCAP)

PCAP was founded in 1977 in Australia as part of the global Ananda Marga philosophy that included caring for native plants and animals. A small community was set up near Maleny in the early 1980s that promoted Neohumanism teachings of connection, compassion, love and respect for all beings and the environment. Although not a current Member Group the River School in Maleny continues the teachings.

#### **Sunshine Coast Bushwalkers**

This group is still actively encouraging bushwalking and good conservation management of natural areas, although not a current SCEC Member Group.



Cooloola Sandpatch from Noosa River Floodplains (Photograph by John Burrows)

#### **Sunshine Coast Wildflower Society**

This group was formed in the late 1970s to lobby for protected areas to conserve diminishing wildflowers on the coast, with Barbara and Alex Hansa among the founding members. In particular they made the first appeals to State government to preserve the wildflower areas around the airport.

It became the short-lived Maroochy branch of WPSQ until the 1980s. Awareness and appreciation of our wildflowers however continued to grow long after the group disbanded and significant protected areas now exist.

#### **The Meeting Place Nambour**

The first Meeting Place opened upstairs at 23 Howard Street. Not only did it provide a venue for community meetings but it promoted cooperation, self-help and New Age spiritualism. (After it moved to larger premises, SCEC would hold meetings there and this later became the SCEC headquarters.) The Meeting Place attracted some controversy because of the spiritualism, but it provided a valuable place to foster the activities of community groups. No longer a SCEC Member Group, the Nambour Community Centre continues this work in the model of a Neighbourhood Centre.

#### Wildlife Preservation Society – Caloundra branch

WPSQ was set up in Brisbane in 1962 and the local branch in 1963 by Kathleen McArthur and others. It continues as the Sunshine Coast's second oldest environment group as Wildlife Queensland – Sunshine Coast and Hinterland which is still a SCEC Member Group.



Kathleen McArthur in the wildflower reserve at Currimundi named posthumously in her honour

The first Wildflower Show was held at Kathleen's home in Caloundra where it continued as an eight-day event until 1970 and was then taken on by other groups, resulting (in 2024) in the two-week Wildflower Festival from Noosa to Bribie Island to educate people about our wildflowers.

#### **Move for Peace**

Active during the 1980s, Move for Peace on the Sunshine Coast worked broadly to prevent the mining, sale and export of uranium and nuclear contamination and promoting the teachings of non-violence and rallies and concerts, it ran workshops to teach the principles of nonviolence in group activities (as exemplified in early conservation protests) and good meeting facilitation processes.



Des Ritchie with the Big Rocket that was towed to many anti-nuclear protests in the 1980s.

# AustralianAssociationofSustainable Communities (AASC)

This was an umbrella group that promoted communities, communal living and sustainable land use in the days when such initiatives were controversial. A number of religious and nonreligious based communities were set up in Sunshine Coast areas during the 1970s and 1980s, although the group no longer exists. However, group title and other forms of land tenure have given rise to eco-communities that are much more mainstream. The Starlight Community was an early Sunshine Coast member of AASC and went on to fight Council to legalise its dwellings in the forest near Yandina.



Starlight Community Hall.

These groups formed the foundation of SCEC and it is noteworthy that some have been Member Groups for the ensuing 40 years.

In 2024 there are 57 Member Groups from K'gari to Bribie Island covering a wide range of issues.

It represents a powerful and influential community coalition still striving for a better environment and communities.

### Chapter 5 A Tribute to Stan Tutt

Stan Tutt was the first Coordinator of SCEC and in 1989 became the first Honorary Life Member. He was a thoughtful man – a logger who became a champion of defending the environment and a kid who left school at 14 who became a respected writer on local heritage.





Woodnook, Stan Tutt's original home in Landsborough.

Herbert Stanley Tutt was born in 1914 in Murgon and he grew up with dirt floors, wood stoves, no running water or electricity. He walked or rode to bush schools until the age of 14 when he left school and went to work at a dairy farm. In the 1930s with his brothers Nigel and Charlie, Stan was scrub felling and timber cutting in the forestry near Imbil. Stan was also beginning to get some of his short stories published.

His first real political involvement in 1939 resulted in being taken to Boggo Road Gaol, along with 35 others who were members of the League of Social Justice. They actually took the Queensland Parliament captive by storming the Australian Labour Party Caucus Room with batons and barricading the corridors with barbed wire. They were demanding (among other things) a 40-hour week. Stan also saw war service, mostly in New Guinea, where he also managed to complete long distance journalism studies. Back home with a young family to support, Stan became a noxious weeds inspector controlling principally groundsel in Caboolture, Maroochy, Noosa and Widgee Shires for the next seventeen years.

Stan became a member of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (WPSQ) Caloundra in 1966 and served on the executive for many years – leading the charge against a paper pulp mill at Elimbah-Beerburrum, with a proposed loading facility on Bribie Island. Stan supported the work of Kathleen McArthur, Arthur Harrold and others over many years to save the Cooloola sand mass from mining.

Stan recalled his early days in conservation in an interview by Jillian Rossiter published in *Eco Echo*:

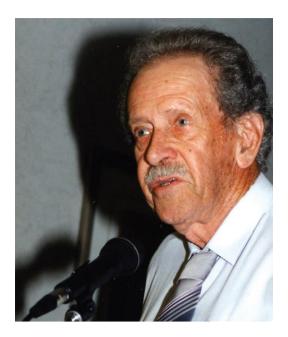
"The Caloundra branch of the WPSQ was very old – I joined in 1966 and also Noosa Parks Association, which Dr Arthur Harrold had originated... That was the time when the battle for Cooloola was in full swing and Kathleen McArthur had organised protest postcards for a send-on to the then unsympathetic government... A lot of action came from those two organisations until 1975 when other organisations came into the area... the Littoral Society, Conondale Range Committee...

We fought the battle of the Kraft Paper Mill. What won it finally was international events – the price of wood pulp went down..." After his retirement in 1978, Stan wrote and edited seven books on Sunshine Coast history. Between 1981 and 2000, he wrote a weekly article on local heritage in the *Sunshine Coast Daily* and a collection of these was later published. The stories are engaging, human and extremely descriptive – capturing an era of which Stan was part.

It is through writing that Stan made his enduring contribution to the Sunshine Coast. Stan was a great thinker whose writing reflected a strong concern for social justice and he had a wonderful turn of phrase. In writing Stan found his true form of expression - and to think that it all started with conservation and trying to save Cooloola from sand mining.

As Stan himself said: "The single issue that converted me to the conservation movement was the threat of sand mining in Cooloola. I wrote – I still remember the title, Beaches under Assault. I wrote "...and would our beaches become faded images in a foreign wallet?"

Towards the end of his writing career his words were prophetic and he frequently expressed concerns about "...the concepts of endless growth, unlimited population (and) the sanctity of monetary profits to the detriment of the natural environment."





Stan was active in both the Caboolture and the Landsborough Historical Societies and was instrumental in establishing the Landsborough Museum. His extraordinary community service was recognised with an OAM for services to local history and conservation in 1994. In 1998 Stan was awarded Life Membership of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland and in 2000 the prestigious Honorary Senior Fellowship from the University of the Sunshine Coast. Not bad for a bloke from the bush who left school at 14.

Stan passed away in 2011 aged 97 years. He chose to end his autobiography (*In Company of Ghosts*, 2000) with the words of Chief Seattle spoken in 1854:

That destiny is a mystery to us, for we do not understand when the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses are tamed, the secret corners of the forest heavy with the scent of many men, and the view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires. Where is the thicket? Where is the eagle? Gone. The end of living and the beginning of survival.

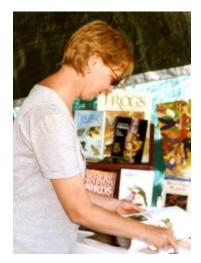
## Chapter 6 SCEC Environment Centre and Shop in Nambour

A shopfront for the Sunshine Coast Environment Council has been part of the fabric of Nambour for 40 years (1984 -2024) although in several iterations as outlined below.

#### 1984 – 2000

The idea of an Environment Centre and a shop to provide fundraising seems to have coincided with the energy of Karen Robinson coming into SCEC in 1982 – 1983. Karen used to transport various craft items around to regular Sunshine Coast markets, which were friendly networking places in the 1980s, to make money to pay for the expenses of trying to *save the world*.

In the summer of 1983 – 1984, Karo Crafts and Environmental Bookshop was set up at Peregian as a trial run shop by Karen and Rod Robinson and Lora Sharp. It was really the first Environment Shop and people like Jenny Knudsen used to drive all the way down from Mapleton to volunteer time there.



Jenny Knudsen

What could be called the very first Environment "Centre" in Nambour actually existed for a short time (1982 to 1984) in the foyer of the old Council Chambers near the railway station on Currie Street. When the first Culley Council was elected in 1982, SCEC lobbied successfully for free space and was given a trestle table and a cupboard to store things in. Faithful volunteers including Felicity Crawford used to person the trestle table with literature and occasionally free choccys.

There was a toilet block (since demolished) between the building and the railway station with seats on top where SCEC could get Council permission to hang banners. Station Square outside was the site of community events such as Peace Rallies and marches to Petrie Park, community quilting and *Womens' Stuff*.



The old Council Chambers in 1935 with its Ionic columns in Currie Street, Nambour became the site of the first Environment Centre in 1982 (Photograph: Picture Sunshine Coast - Sunshine Coast Council)

The Council foyer was not however the ideal place for an environment centre and was very limited in terms of space. A special committee was set up to study the feasibility of renting space for an Environment Centre with submissions made by Karen Robinson, John Skelton from Permaculture Nambour and Barbara Camplin from The Meeting Place. Not everyone was happy but after much discussion (and unfortunately dissent from the above Member Groups) and with a \$200 budget, a shop was leased at 26B Arundell Ave, Nambour. Much of the stock Karen had accumulated from market stalls became *Kurrajong Crafts* which was SCEC's first Environment Shop's name when it opened in November 1984.

Garry Lawler and Robyn (Lawler) Dean/Marx were involved right from the start and recall –

"None of the tin walls or ceiling were lined. We, that is Karen, Ganga, Rod Robinson and ourselves, and a few others, built the gallery walls out of el-cheapo ply and second hand timber for studs. The shop walls were lined with hessian. Old bits of furniture, shelves, chairs etc were found, scrounged or made up where necessary. Jenny Knudsen gave us an old parachute, rescued from the Mapleton Craft Group which decorated the big back room ceiling nicely... Finally, after burning the midnight oil on more than a few occasions, we were ready to launch. John Sinclair of Fraser Island fame officially opened the Centre in November 1984 with about 100 people crammed in..."



Robyn Lawler (Dean/Marx)

The shop in Arundell Ave organised regular showings of local artists in the gallery. Dr Ailo Keto, who helped to fundraise for the World Heritage Campaign for the North Queensland rainforests and Dr Jim Cairns, who launched his book *Human Growth*, attracted big crowds. The publicity these exhibitions attracted also served as valuable advertising and SCEC will always remain deeply grateful to the many talented local artists and crafts people and the musicians who gave so freely towards SCEC ideals.

Jenny Knudsen, one of the first shop volunteers, recalled that potter Michael Pugh, musician Tony O'Conner and Chris Boston, who became a doll maker of world renown, were among the first to consign. Consignment was also a time honoured way to fill up a shop with no outlay. The shop catered for a fairly unique niche market which was slowly eroded over time. The shop championed local artists and craftspeople and in these early days the stock that the SCEC Shop offered was in strong demand. Christmas trade carried SCEC financially.

Students and teachers came to the centre, seeking resources for school projects. Holiday workshops in paper making and a myriad of craft activities were held there. The shop provided a focus for people who were concerned about local and global conservation issues and provided a "soft" entry to environmental activism for many people.

It was an important part of recruiting support for campaigns and getting information out to the mainstream. It gave SCEC the credibility of a business but also the headaches. Without volunteers the shop could never have got off the ground or kept going.



Kurrajong Crafts-26B Arundell Avenue, Nambour

From Arundell Avenue the shop moved to 41 Howard Street. Much fanfare accompanied the official opening by Bob Brown on the 6th of June 1987. People like Karen and Rod Robinson, Ganga Hawkins, Robyn and Garry Lawler and many others kept the shop going.

And 'out the back' was the shoebox sized environment resource centre. With hardly enough room to swing a possum, people like Mark Ricketts worked there and SCEC meetings were mostly held there with a loose arrangement for using the Meeting Place up the road if more than 10 people showed up because that was all that could fit. SCEC employed Tony O'Keefe part time to cope with the growing demand for SCEC to go to schools to talk and help students after school seeking resources and Beryl Muspratt subsequently took up this educational role.

The shop featured local crafts and *Australiana*, cards, stickers, t-shirts and a bookshop. A team of volunteers kept it staffed. Robyn Dean left full time participation in the shop and SCEC in 1987 and Sue Coleman, who had been working as a volunteer for 6 months, became the shop manager. Sue continued in this position for 6 years. Sue built up a reliable team of volunteers and also kept the books in excellent order, free of debt and usually made a surplus of several thousand dollars a year to fund SCEC.



41 Howard Street



Sue Coleman-SCEC Shop Manager



Inside the wonderland of the SCEC Shop

The need for a larger Environment Centre drove the move to upstairs at 23 Howard Street in 1989 and for a while the shop was still at 41 Howard St.

The shop finally moved downstairs at 23 Howard Street. Sue's artistic flair and her husband Keith's carpentry skills gave it a great start in new premises where it was reborn as the **Sunshine Coast Environment Shop.** 



State Environment Minister Molly Robson officially opens the SCEC Shop at 23 Howard Street Nambour in 1992

Sue Coleman finally left the shop in December 1993 after 6 years and Jenny Knudsen became manager. Jenny's creative skills and retail experience kept the shop operating profitably – just – in the face of increasing competition from shops selling similar goods. Jenny moved the full circle after being a volunteer in the first experimental shop in Peregian to being the shop manager and again kept a great team of volunteers going.

Then Caroline Gould came in as shop manager, continuing the great tradition in the face of even more competition from *Geo* shops and the like, and with Nambour losing a huge market share of shoppers to Maroochydore. As with all shop managers, Caroline put in many volunteer hours at Wildflower Shows, Environment Day Festivals and other events.

Sue Stone took over in 1999 and sadly presided over the final demise of the shop. Sue was perhaps the first person to actually realise that the shop could not continue to trade viably and did a fantastic job of getting things in order and winding down – a huge task.



Caroline Gould (left) and Sue Stone (Findlay)

The Environment Shop closed its doors at the end of January 2000, marking 15 years and 2 months since the first SCEC shop in Arundell Ave, Nambour.

#### The Environment Centre 1990 - 2024

Meanwhile, as mentioned, the Environment Centre had moved out of the "shoebox" at the back of the shop into larger premises upstairs at 23 Howard Street. In September 1990, Pat Comben (then Queensland State Environment Minister) came to officially opening the new SCEC Centre and was the guest speaker at a dinner the same evening held in the Howard Street Kitchen.

SCEC continued to operate upstairs at 23 Howard Street until 2004 when a move was made to a newer building at 3 Porters Lane and there is a story about this building that needs to be told...

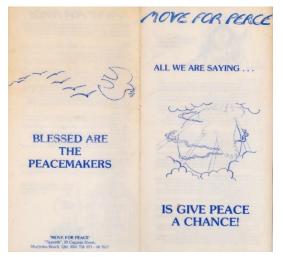
On the eve of Anzac Day 1987, in the dead of night – an arsonist struck Nambour. First the Anglican Church in Nambour's main street, (located right next door to the Fire Station) was set on fire. Shortly afterwards, the Methodist Church in Maud Street was ablaze and then, incredibly, the Lutheran Church in nearby Sydney Street was also on fire. An attempt was made to burn the altar in the Catholic Church and the arsonist's deadly serious work then moved to light up a group of shops which included a Christian Literature Centre, the Get Ahead Hairdressing salon, Raylor's Hardware and Gifts, the Queen Street branch of National Australia Bank and the Basics Co-op at 3 Porters Lane. The flames could be seen from Bli Bli and around 50 firemen were unable to deal with the fires deliberately lit in 6 locations one after the other.

The arsonist was a troubled Vietnam Veteran called Kenneth Grosschalk who certainly made his own statement on that Anzac Day 1987.

Needless to say, the Anzac Day parade and ceremony went ahead amid cordoned off streets and smoky ruins and this day has passed into local history.

The reason why this is important is the link between the building which was the Basics Coop and SCEC. The building was owned by Janet and Ian College, who rebuilt after the fire, the badly damaged original wooden structure. It became a spacious *Bessa* block construction when it was rebuilt and right from the start there was a dedicated community meeting room.

SO... Basics Co-op moved back into the new building and continued to provide fresh local and organic produce and from February 1988 Move for Peace operated an information centre (and sold t-shirts!) out of the meeting room one day a week.



Stalwarts of this group included Julie Sauterel, Des Ritchie and Helen Hutchison. Helen was one of a small group of dedicated volunteers who worked at the Basics Co-op and then after the Co-op folded she took over the lease of the building and opened Basically Organic in July 1995.

When Helen wound up the business in December 2004, she became the driving force behind SCEC relocating to these large premises (and then threw herself into being a SCEC volunteer).



Helen Hutchison

SCEC became more financially solvent in 2004, following finalisation of the estate of Abel Honey and was able to actually employ people. The Environment Centre (without a shop) operated in Porters Lane for the next 18 years. The former Move for Peace room provided a permanent meeting space for SCEC and the office was able to expand.

In September 2022, SCEC moved to the shopfront at 35 Howard Street where a small book sales area was incorporated. It is almost the full circle and so SCEC has had a rotating presence in Howard Street since 1987 and is (in 2024) still there.

However, Nambour is no longer the geographic centre of the Sunshine Coast as the population base has continued to concentrate on the coast. The town has seen a significant decline in small retail outlets - which further deepened after the Sunshine Coast Regional Council moved to Maroochydore. With COVID, plus an ageing membership base for so many community groups, volunteering and events have also fallen off. Students now want their information online so the times have certainly changed since 1984.

It is a tribute to SCEC that it has continued to operate an Environment Centre in Nambour for 40 years.

## **Chapter 7 Communications**

Back in the day – way before emails– how did people communicate? We had this wonderful thing called a *Telephone Tree* for efficient contact and which was a lot more personal than email. Most people on the Tree would call two others on branches below them and the lucky ones on the bottom of the branch didn't have to call anyone. We also had hand bills and posters that went out all over the Sunshine Coast to advertise events.

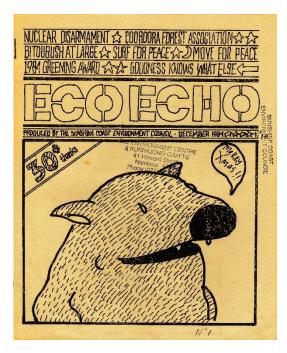
One of the main reasons SCEC was established was to improve communications between community groups and in the 1980s, newsletters were the way to go. As well as publishing its own newsletter to reach Member Groups and interested members of the public, SCEC was a repository for newsletters from other regional conservation groups, local, State and national groups. SCEC's communications played a vital networking function with Member Groups and for campaigns.

The actual paper products have evolved from the first humble *roneo-ed* newsletter to an A4 magazine, *Eco Echo*, dubbed the *Green Voice of the Sunshine Coast*, which started in 1984 and finished in 2005. A new tabloid newspaper format called *ECO* (Sunshine Coast Eco News) ran from 2006 to 2014. Hard copy publications were never a financial success for SCEC, their main aim being educational and informative. Communications have since been restricted to online with more emphasis on email and the website as a source of information.

SCEC has had a continuous public form of communication since its incorporation in 1984 to inform interested people of issues and activities by SCEC and its Member Groups.

#### **First Newsletters**

The very first SCEC newsletter came out in September 1984. It was on that now extinct paper size called A4 letter (longer than A4), hand typed and pasted up and copied with a *roneo* duplicating machine, then hand stapled on one corner. It was a labour of love and featured photocopies of newspaper articles relating to the environment. By the next edition in December 1984 the newsletter had transitioned to being called *Eco Echo*. Newsletters provided updates on issues and recruited volunteers and attendees for the allimportant fund raisers.



#### Eco Echo

Eco Echo appeared as A5 pages folded like a booklet with a coloured paper cover and featuring hand drawn lettering and artwork. Content soon expanded to 12 pages and David Mills was acknowledged as the Editor, Ganga Hawkins for typing; John Adena for artwork with "a combined effort for collating etc." John Adena was credited with coming up with the name *Eco Echo*. An article by Cooroora Forest Association informed the reader that following its 120 page submission to the Minister for Lands, Forests and Police (an interesting portfolio combination!) a Pomona Forest Management Advisory Committee had been set up with representatives from local government, the timber industry, conservation interests and the Forestry Department. The article stated that "It was the first time that the Queensland government has ever made a formal effort to with the public forest consult on management."

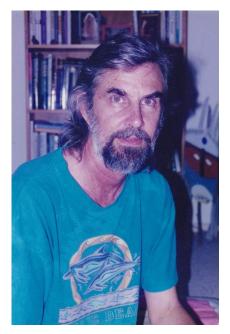
*Eco Echo* in this format continued – with a price tag of 30 cents – quickly rising to 50 cents. Issues generally came out 2 - 3 times a year. Content covered a fairly wide range of conservation news, Member Group reports and publicity for events.

There was no acknowledged editor until March 1986 when Karen Robinson was cited and Robyn Lawler, Ganga Hawkins and others were part of the production team.

The December 1986 issue introduced *Shire by Shire*, written by Garry Lawler, which summarised conservation issues in each of the three Sunshine Coast local government areas (Noosa, Maroochy and Caloundra).

It was a huge effort to produce Eco Echo and in that very edition SCEC placed an advertisement for an Editor - to "collect, coordinate and collate" *Eco Echo*.

#### Eco Echo Editors

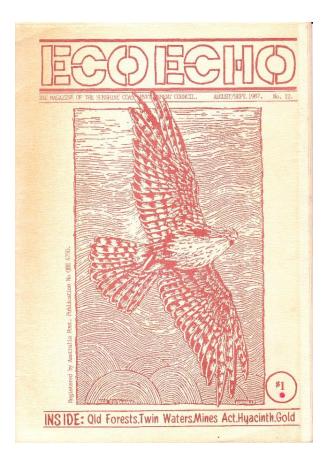


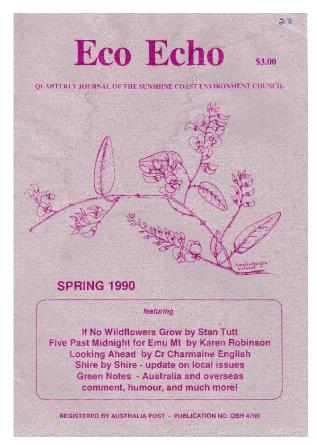
**Richard Giles** 

#### **Richard Giles**

Richard Giles stepped into the role and took *Eco Echo* from being a newsletter to a magazine with the June 1987 issue. Richard was actively involved in the Conondale Range Committee and had worked on the *Sunshine News*, from 1980 – 1982. He initiated the first public sales of the magazine through health food stores, book shops and selected newsagents AND put the price up to ninety cents.

Richard's signature was great covers and he made up a headline banner display at sales outlets. He persuaded SCEC to get the magazine actually printed for the first time, which lifted its quality 100%. It now sold for one dollar. Richard bowed out at issue #13.





#### **Elaine Green**

(I declare an interest, yes that is me.) I came on board with Issue #14 in May 1988, writing on a typewriter, cutting out and pasting to make the pages which were often crooked. Good old Lettraset made fancy headlines.

Then SCEC got a photocopier for the first time. My achievements are that I moved SCEC into the digital age with Issue #19 in May 1989, thanks to the teachings of Bill Hauritz from then Maleny Folk Festival (Woodford Festival in 2024) on the magical Apple Mac.

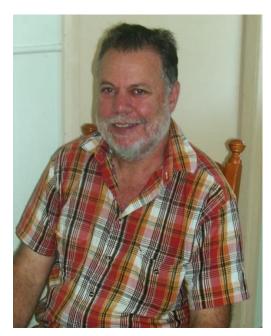
I introduced coloured paper covers and an A4 format. I also doubled the price to two dollars then \$2.50.

My last issue as Editor was #23 in Spring 1990, and as a parting gift, I bumped it up to three dollars. (Worth every cent!)



Elaine Green

#### **Mark Warnick**

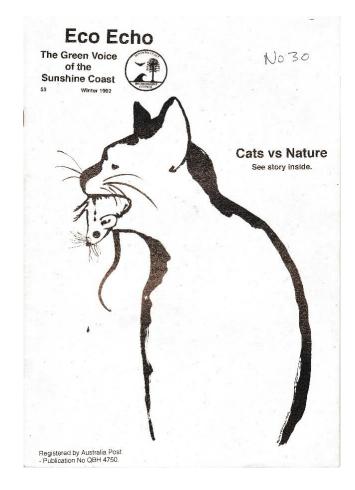


Mark Warnick

Mark came on board for Issue #24 in December 1990 with the very first *Eco Echo* cover that included a photo – of the Morton Sugar Mill in central Nambour belching out smoke. He was the first actual trained journalist to edit *Eco Echo* and kept up a high standard of headlines, such as – *Is everything sweet with our sugar cane? Green Tree Frog bounces back.* 

Mark put a great deal of effort into building up the Member Groups contributions to *Eco Echo*. He also coined the term *The Green Voice of the Sunshine Coast* that was first used in Spring 1991 for Issue #27.

Unfortunately Issue #30 in June 1992 was Mark's last. It featured a memorable *Cats vs Nature* feature and a cover picture of a cat with a native rat in its mouth that was actually quite controversial at the time.



#### **Ruth Venner**



Ruth Venner

With Issue # 31 came new editor Ruth Venner, who brought a more spiritual touch to *Eco Echo*. As a calligrapher, Ruth brought fancy hieroglyphics, and more white space into layouts. Sadly Issue #34 In June 1992 was Ruth's last edition.

#### **Jillian Rossiter**



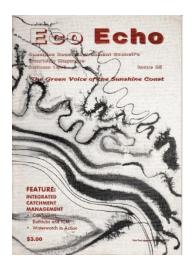
Jillian Rossiter

Jillian had been volunteering in the office for a few years and rose to the occasion by putting her hand up to edit *Eco Echo*, with Issue #35 in June 1993 her first edition.

Wisely Jillian got her own computer and worked from home which may have contributed to her longevity as an editor.

She also had a proof reader, John Sherston, right from the start. Jillian involved Jocelyn Geraghty as an assistant and her original covers were works of art since the first in Issue #45.

Advertising was what made *Eco Echo* viable and it was part of the job of being Editor to source, layout and follow up payment for the ads. Jillian built up the advertising and brought in the *Green Pages* that featured local ethical businesses. She also produced a new-look masthead and gave the cover a new full-colour glossy (recycled of course) cover and in Winter 1997 *Eco Echo* celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> edition. Jillian introduced interviews for a series that she called the *Vanguard Voices for the Environment* with SCEC people.

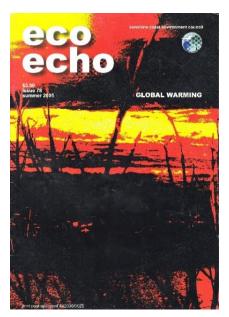


After 7 years Jillian took a break with guest editors Elaine Green (Issue #63) and Michael Powell (Issue #64) filling in but she was back with Issue #65 Autumn/Winter 2001. Jillian was also coordinating the *Greenhouse* at the Woodford Festival which was a very big task, so by Issue #71 in Winter 2003 she called it quits. Elaine Green stepped in again for Issue #72.

#### Sammy Ringer

In Autumn 2004, *Eco Echo* had its first paid Editor in its 40 year history to date. Sammy Ringer continued the traditions of great full colour covers, hard hitting articles and naturebased stories as well as updates on SCEC and Member Group activities.

Issue #78 in Summer 2005 was the very last edition of *Eco Echo* as a magazine style publication.



#### ECO

SCEC General manager Ian Christesen metamorphosed the magazine into a tabloid newspaper style publication called *ECO*. This was a well thought out concept outlined in a 24-page rationale backed up by considerable research. The model adopted was a free 16-page full colour bi-monthly newspaper with an initial print run of 10,000 distributed widely across the Sunshine Coast. It was printed on 100% recycled newsprint using soy based inks to be greenhouse neutral.

Jen Mazoudier became the first dedicated advertising manager and advertising prices increased to reflect the true value to advertisers of being in a "green" publication with a greatly expanded readership.

Ian Christesen brought in true professionals, journalists like Andrew Carrol and Greg Hardwick, later Brian Rickards, graphic designers Tristan and Dr CI Claridge with layout by the *Range News*, Maleny. SCEC President Valerie Lewis was initially Editor-in-chief followed by Brian Rickards. The first edition came out in April-May 2006. It covered issues like sustainable energy, climate change and the bubbling away of an issue that would soon boil over – construction of a new dam on the Mary River. The content of *ECO* was well researched and written and contained a bounty of information on environmental issues both local and global.

In early 2008 the *ECO* hit a new milestone celebrating 150,000 newspapers printed and distributed and a new website. The editorial team consisted of Greg Hardwick, Lyndall Chase, Tristan Claridge, Anne White and Jenifer Mazoudier was still getting the all-important advertisers.

The last edition of *ECO* came out in December 2013-January 2014. It was a marathon effort to pull it together every 2 months and to obtain advertising to sustain it. As the use of emails, social media and online forms of communication continued to increase, SCEC entered the era of digital communications.



Left: Ian Christesen



## **Chapter 8 Wildflowers**

#### **Christmas Bells**



The once common Christmas bells (Blandfordia grandiflora) are now an endangered species (photograph by Jillian Rossiter)

The story of Christmas bells on the Sunshine Coast is a classic example of how development has been at the expense of native flora. The Caloundra area was the best known locality in Queensland to find these most beautiful of wildflowers.

Stan Tutt ("Squandered Heritage?" *Sunshine Coast Heritage* 1995) recalled:

"Every year prior to 1939, as the summer sun warmed the mysterious wallum land of the region now known as the Sunshine Coast, the low-lying 'pademelon swamps' produced a crop of red gold. **Thousands of Christmas bells** offered their annual pledge of life to sun and land.

To many families struggling to make a living, the Christmas bells were accepted as part of their natural heritage. Men, women and children...scrambled through the reedy 'melon-hole country' picking Christmas bells. Railway platforms blazed with banks of red and gold flowers, waiting for the mail train which would take bunches and crates of Christmas bells to the Brisbane Markets...

Then came World War 2, followed by the "rage of the bulldozer", rooting homes for alien slash pine and other things. The heritage of the Christmas bells and other beautiful wildflowers of the region was not considered."

Rosemary Opala from Caloundra branch of WPSQ described their habitat (*Eco Echo* #17):

"The Christmas Bell (*Blandfordia grandiflora*) is a member of the Lilium family, found in Queensland on the coastal belt south of Maryborough.

The brilliant bi-coloured flowers are borne on tall stalks, are usually a mix of vermillion and yellow, through to an all-yellow variant that predominates in the Cooloola area. The plant grows from along bulb-like roots and also sets seeds within the flowers, two reasons why plant disturbance is a threat to the species.

Its habitat is very specialized, Bells preferring the alternative holes and hummocks of the wallum swamps, where they grow on mounds with their feet in water. Destruction of habitat is a prime factor in the disappearance of these beauties from our landscape. All too sadly, on the Sunshine Coast, Bells are often talked about in retrospect, in terms of the bucketfuls sold along roadsides and on railway stations in the "old days", and the loads carelessly pulled from the limitless wallum plains of our summer holidays."

Pressure from conservationists led to the National Parks and Wildlife Service carrying out a survey to assess remaining Christmas bell populations in 1990. Rosemary Opala followed up on this in Spring 1991 with another article in *Eco Echo* #23:

"We have recently had the results of the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service's two-year survey on the distribution of the Christmas bells in Queensland... As expected, the survey results show the accelerating disappearance of Bells in all areas except National and Environmental Parks and State Forests...

With the development of the Kawana area since the 1960s, a major habitat has been replaced by housing and light industry; and in the Marcoola area, another extensive habitat wiped out by development and drainage for the airport. It is thought that Mooloolah River National Park may contain the only viable long term population in this section of the coast.

Quite recently, in Caloundra, remnants of a Bell colony between Corbould Park and Caloundra Road vanished, along with other 'natives rubbish' in some drastic roadside clearing – ostensibly to also remove weeds, which will now have a nice cultivated head start. Hopefully other Christmas Bells across the road (just south of Sattlers Rd) which made a nice show last summer of both yellow and bi-colour varieties, will be left in peace in their Environmental Park strip for a few more seasons.

Suburbia has encroached on part of the (Christmas) Bell area in the north of Currimundi Environment Park; while, unless another tip site can be found, the future of a sizable population for Bells in the Council reserve south of the racecourse is dim indeed. The area north of Marcoola to Tin Can Bay inlet now contains the largest remaining population of B. grandiflora in Queensland. South of Noosa township are a number of populations in drainage lines of dune swales, with an uncertain future dependent on a planned reserve. Others are found in the Noosa North Shore area. By far the largest Bell populations occur in the Cooloola National Park and Wide Bay Military Reserve. A few other locations are found in State forest, in narrow swamps left unplanted when exotic pine was established during the 1950s to 1970s.

The most northerly locations occur near the western coastline of Fraser Island (K'gari).

The 1987-1989 survey also showed that *B.* grandiflora flowers most profusely from December to January, 1 - 2 years after a fire. The flower is easily identified but the plant very difficult to locate when not in bloom."

## 42-year campaign for wildflowers on Crown Land

An area of 268 acres (108ha) on the floodplain of Maroochy River just south of Mt. Coolum was declared a National Park in 1949. Its low lying land supported a profusion of wildflowers, banksias and melaleucas and on its northern-most end, a rare species of *Eucalyptus conglomerata* (Swamp stringybark – now an endangered species) which were protected from development. That is until the coming of the airport in 1959 led to its degazettal as a national park. By 1961 the land had become an aerodrome reserve and Development Lease 3 (DL3) – earmarked for residential development.



Native iris (*Patersonia sericea*) found in wallum wetland and open woodlands

In 1976 the Mt. Coolum Golf Club had been established and around 1988-1989 the Club applied for and was granted part of the Crown Land, known as DL3, to expand the golf course. The enormous amount of fill required had left it un-developed and in 1978 the Sunshine Coast Wildflower Society was formed to lobby for the permanent protection of valuable wildflower areas in reserves, and specifically DL3. They made a submission to Maroochy Shire Council in 1978 and to State government in 1982. The developer indicated they would give up 200ha (494ac) for a wildflower reserve if compensation was paid.

During the mid-1980s the Development Lease lapsed due to lack of progress and it became Vacant Crown Land (VCL) or Portion 877. Although construction of a 65 metre wide drain in 1990 significantly impacted the wildflowers, SCEC actively campaigned for protection of the remaining Crown land. Officers from Maroochy Shire Council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service inspected the site and indeed found that the excavation of the massive drain had affected the quality of the existing vegetation on the site. The northern end was the most degraded, whilst the southern and south-western sections of the site were in the best condition.

A report to Maroochy Council stated: "The subject land is all that remains of the original wallum country between Maroochy River and Mt Coolum. It provides a link between the Mt Coolum NP and the Mudjimba Reserve 301."

It was to take 42 years for the wildflowers in P8778 and P878 to be finally protected as part of Mt Coolum National Park. Sometimes in conservation, you have to be very persistent.



#### Sunshine Coast Wildflower Show

Kathleen McArthur loved and illustrated Queensland's wildflowers, becoming an author and publishing several books in her quest to engage the community about the rarity and fragility of the wildflowers, particularly in the wallum and heathlands. She founded the Caloundra branch (now Sunshine Coast and Hinterland branch) of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (WPSQ) and was involved in several early environmental battles.

The first Wildflower Show was held at her home *Midyim* in Kings Beach in 1967 to raise funds for WPSQ. It was then an 8-day wildflower show with potted plants for sale along with Kathleen's beautiful wildflower paintings and samples of the wildflowers with their common and scientific names on display so that people could learn about the local species.

The following year in 1968, a couple of thousand people came. It was an outstanding success that raised the profile of the mostly inconspicuous and highly diverse wallum wildflowers among the general public but could not be sustained in a small garden. The last Wildflower Show was held at *Midyim* in 1970.



Wallum boronia (*Boronia falcifolia*) grows to one metre in peat swamps and heathlands.

Christmas Bells. (Photograph by John Burrows)

After 1971, with interest levels in local native plants increasing, new venues included Fairhill Nursery, the Coolum Community Centre and Coolum State School. Local groups organised guided walks in the wallum plains. It was taken on by the Sunshine Coast Wildflower Society in the early 1980s and then the Maroochy branch of WPSQ that existed for several years hosted it until 1988. It was held at the Coolum Community Centre.



The specially built wildflower display board

SCEC took it on as a joint venture in 1989 and after that it became a SCEC fundraiser.

Into the 1990s and beyond, a major contributor was Coolum & North Shore Coast Care, who with Maroochy Waterwatch and the Yaroomba Progress Association set up the Coolum Community Native Nursery.

Highlighting the need to preserve the mostly inconspicuous and highly biodiverse wallum wildflowers was the focus of many SCEC campaigns at the annual Wildflower Shows. These successful campaigns led directly to the reserves at Currimundi and Mooloolah River National Park, Emu Mountain, and later, Emu Swamp and Weyba National Park, Marcus Shores and Noosa North Shore.

The 1999 Wildflower Show attracted record numbers of visitors and included an art exhibition by Kathleen McArthur. Wildflower tours coordinated by Barbara Henderson took in the Vanilla lily *(Sowerboeo juncticus)*  wildflower plains of Marcoola, the Marcus Beach High Dune heath and the Emu Mountain rocky outcrop wildflowers. Primrose Gamble collected, identified and displayed an exquisite and diverse selection of wildflower species for many years.



Primrose Gamble was a local wildflower expert who worked at Fairhill Nursery



Alison Smith embarking on a wildflower tour

Over time, this celebration of wildflowers and guided walks across the Coast has become the Sunshine Coast Wildflower Festival, facilitated by Sunshine Coast Council. So many more people value what is left of the wildflowers of the Sunshine Coast thanks to these early educational exhibitions.

In 2024 SCEC Member Groups and other community organisations are involved in hosting free guided walks in public reserves across the Sunshine Coast, Noosa and Bribie Island.

The biodiverse wealth of the wallum wildflowers has been replaced by roads and housing except in a few protected areas – all of which owe their existence to the efforts of conservationists.

#### **Battle for Emu Mountain**

Another area that became the focus of a massive environmental campaign highlighted at the Wildflower Shows was Emu Mountain - one of the favourite places to take people to see wildflowers in August when the shows were held. Its rocky slopes host a bounty of wildflowers – among which is a completely endemic species called the *Allocasuarina emuina*, a small variety of She-oak found only in this area.



Allocasuarina emuina-The Mt. Emu She Oak

Like Mt. Coolum today, Emu Mountain is a protected area, but both could easily have become quarries for road materials when roads were being built for coastal development in the 1960s and 1970s.

A Department of Primary Industry (DPI) research station had been established on flat land abutting Emu Mountain. When this closed down in the late 1970s and the area reverted to Vacant Crown Land, wildflower lovers and conservationists pressed for a national park in the area to include the mountain.

An application for a movie production studio there was made in 1979 but knocked back by the Lands Administration Commission on the grounds that consideration was being given to including the area around Emu Mountain within the coastal Environment Park Reserve R1098.

However, the coastal portion of the land, including Emu Mountain was purchased by the Lands Administration Commission (LAC) and the Department of Commercial and Industrial Development purchased a portion behind this. The LAC then announced its intention to build a housing estate around, if not on, Emu Mountain.

The Wildflower Society had evolved into the Maroochy branch of the Wildlife Preservation Society with Karen Robinson, Garry and Robyn Lawler and others lobbying hard to try to claw back some of this land for public ownership. A leaked copy of a plan revealed that 4-500 residential sites were proposed. SCEC joined in the campaign and the annual wildflower shows were used to highlight the development proposal and increase public awareness of the importance of Emu Mountain and its unique flora. There was even a proposal to build a water tower on top of the Mountain to serve the houses.

On 26 May, 1987, despite 800 objections, State Cabinet approved the rezoning of the land. It was done as a Ministerial Rezoning by Russ Hinze, which prevented any appeals by objectors. The area contained around 200 species of flowering native plants and sedges, stands of scribbly gums and tumbledown gums hundreds of years old, and fulfilled a vital role as a major wildlife corridor. The State's concession to conservation was a 30m buffer strip along the highway and the removal of 6 blocks for a nature corridor.

Stage 1 of the subdivision, containing 52 blocks, was auctioned in March 1989. The change of State government later in the same year renewed hopes that more of the area could be rescued from the LAC. Stage 2 however proceeded but stages 3 and 4 of the housing estate did not. In February 2004, 10ha at the base of Mt Emu was added to the national park. Conservationists continued to lobby for permanent protection of the mountain and the area ultimately became the southern end of the Noosa to Coolum "greenbelt".

The 1990s would bring SCEC and Member Groups into new battles against further development of some of the remaining wallum country behind Coolum.



Once called the Common swamp orchid, *Phaius Australis* can reach 2m in height but is now an endangered species in the wild.



Wildflowers on Emu Mountain

## Chapter 9 First SCEC Campaigns

Right from its origin, SCEC became involved in "politics". In the repressive days of Joh Bjelke Petersen, people were not as outspoken against government and those elected to local government generally towed the conservative line.

On 21 November 1980, SCEC held a meeting at the Burnside High School, in Nambour, a week prior to the State elections and invited candidates from Caboolture, Landsborough and Cooroora electorates to discuss environmental issues. It was at fairly short notice but surprisingly the response was remarkably positive. Of the 13 candidates, 11 responded. Those actually present at the meeting were Gordon Simpson MLA (National Cooroora), Barbara Cansdell (Independent candidate Landsborough), Barry Byrne (ALP candidate Landsborough) and Syd Appleby (ALP candidate Cooroora).

Seven apologies were received - from Mike MLA Ahern (National candidate Landsborough), Paul Kingsford (Liberal candidate Landsborough), John Barbeler (Liberal candidate Cooroora), Don Sime (Independent candidate Cooroora), Norrie Hill (ALP candidate Caboolture), Tom McLoughlin (ALP candidate Caboolture) and John Ferguson (Independent candidate Caboolture). It was a hotly contested election and 6 out of these 7 provided written statements on their attitudes to various environmental issues.

Among the issues discussed were a proposed giant Kraft Wood Pulp mill near Beerburrum which was generally condemned by those present and also interestingly all candidates expressed opposition to nuclear power plants being built in Queensland. SCEC was an early advocate of community *Meet the Candidate* meetings before Council and State elections to encourage participation and put community and environmental issues on the table and in the media.

#### Toxic chemicals in the 1980s

An early campaign that involved SCEC, Member Groups and residents was against toxic chemicals in the environment. In the 1980s the use of chemicals in the natural environment, particularly spraying for mosquitos, was widespread and toxic. After Maroochy Shire Council passed a motion sanctioning the aerial spraying of the Environment Park area near Stumers Creek, SCEC and locals rallied together. A successful campaign resulted in SCEC and the National Parks & Wildlife Service working together to eradicate groundsel by hand with the "cut and daub" method used instead of aerial spraying. Council allocated money to SCEC to cover administrative costs. Twenty people were needed for every session and it was a 4-month "trial" but it kept the issue in the public eye. Volunteers also worked weeding out pine trees and picking up litter in the whole area from the David Low Way to Stumers Creek.

On the Blackall Range people united to rally against aerial spraying which was in widespread use on avocado and banana crops. The area was a major avocado producer but poor town planning had allowed new rural residential estates next to working farms.

Dr Ian Matthews practised in the Mapleton area and wrote about spray drift issues in the hinterland: "There were two main ways in which the spraying issue used problems between the resident of residential areas and the farming community.

 Aerial spraying of farmlands with fertilisers, fungicides and pesticides by farmers on the Blackall Range itself, where residential subdivisions were adjacent to farms...

(2) Aerial and ground spraying of chemicals such as 2,4-D, used to control groundsel on the Eastern escarpment of the Blackall Range by farmers beneath Mapleton, Flaxton and Montville.

In both instances the problem arose from complaints by residents that chemicals were drifting over their properties, contaminating tank water supplies, affecting kitchen gardens and their health.

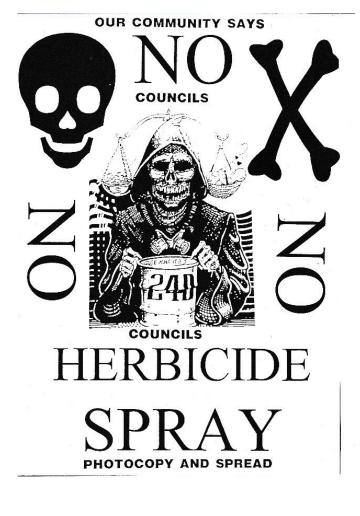
Back in 1983 I first raised the problems with the State Health Department, as did several residents. At this stage I had seen several people who complained of the same symptoms after 2,4-D was sprayed along the Eastern escarpment of the Blackall Range to eradicate groundsel. Many people complained of itchy red eyes, tightness in the chest, headaches and nausea, and revealed symptoms consistent with either chemical irritation or mild allergy reactions...

The latest concern arose from the alleged drift of chemicals sprayed on the Range by a farmer, with drift of the spray across adjacent properties. On this occasion residents complained of nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain."

Continued pressure applied to Maroochy Shire Council bore fruit when they adopted the first legislative attempt to control chemical spraying. The State rejected their Bylaw on the grounds that *it was State regulation business*. Australia was "third world" in terms of chemical regulations with many pesticides which had been banned overseas freely available. It became a wider and wider issue and more and more people were agitating for better regulations to control the sale and use of chemicals. The government brought out a Green paper on agricultural chemical use in 1988. The use of various toxic chemicals grew in the next decade and it remained a contentious issue.

Finally, in 1997, the Department of Natural Resources introduced the "Planning Guidelines: Separating Agricultural and Residential Land Uses". The guidelines have the following objectives (DNR 1997;3) which included:

"...To minimise scope for conflict by developing where possible, a well-defined boundary between agricultural and residential areas and not interspersing agricultural and residential areas... The Queensland guidelines specify a minimum spray drift buffer width of 20 metres planted with trees and at least 10 metres clear of vegetation to either side of the vegetated area to give a total buffer width of 40 metres (DNR, 1997)."



#### Marina Gardens 1973 – 1990

This was a very large campaign that ran from 1973 to 1982 and involved primarily SCEC Member Group Australian Littoral Society but broadened to become perhaps the first coalition on the Sunshine Coast where farmers and greenies were on the same side.

The following is reprinted from *Green Legends*:

"In 1973, Maroochy Council had given approval in principle to a residential canal estate development to be called Marina Gardens on the Maroochy River upstream of Bli Bli Bridge. It was subject to approval from the Harbours & Marine Department of State government. In a moment of decisiveness, they acted to declare a Fisheries Habitat in the river reserve adjacent to the proposed development site. Maroochy Council, however, continued to support the canal development while State government held back approval for several years. Then, in a rare show of solidarity, following a meeting of eight government advisory bodies held to assess the proposal, the Queensland Cabinet rejected the application in May 1976.

**Only one month later** they reversed their decision. Approval still had to be obtained from Maroochy Council but this was obviously considered a foregone conclusion. Until then, there had been little public objection and there were actually **seven other canal estate proposals** for the Maroochy River on the drawing boards, watching and waiting in the wings.

Enter Jim Cash who, along with Julie Johnson and others, had formed the Sunshine Coast branch of the Australian Littoral Society (ALS). A petition in opposition to Marina Gardens attracted 2,800 signatures. In an unusual liaison, the Moreton Region Canegrowers Association joined conservationists in opposition to the development. Cooroora MLA Gordon Simpson, himself a canegrower, added weight to their cause and pressure on Council to oppose the development grew. Farmers were afraid that flood levels would increase if canal developments were allowed to proliferate on the Maroochy River.

So, in another twist, in November 1976, Council decided that the proposal was not in the best interests of the community and reversed its approval. Naturally, the developer took the Council to Court. Council depended heavily on environmental matters for its defence and the Court ruled that environmental matters were the concern of the State government's Department of Harbours & Marine and not Maroochy Shire (Thankfully some things have Council. changed.) Council was forced to give provisional approval. At this point in most people's minds the battle had been lost and this would be the first of many canal estates on Maroochy River.

By 1977, Maroochy Shire Council had resolved that, until a flood study of the Maroochy and Mooloolah Rivers had been carried out, they would not approve any form of canal development for residential purposes.

Furthermore, the application had to be approved by Department of Harbours & Marine. In January 1978, **State Cabinet granted approval in principle to Marina Gardens, subject to certain conditions** – that the development was to be completed within 2 years, a headworks charge for water and sewerage of \$870,000 was required and the developers had to obtain rezoning for the site from Problem Drainage Area to Residential A. So effectively the buck was passed back to Maroochy Council. Perhaps worn down by 5 years of battles and sniffing defeat, in July 1978, the developers arranged a meeting with the Littoral Society (ALS) to enlist support for State government acquisition of the land.

Local Government Minister, Russ Hinze, refused to meet a combined delegation. In May 1979, another petition in opposition to the rezoning was launched and achieved an amazing 5,000 signatures.

Lobbying for purchase continued throughout 1979 and Council even reduced the headworks charges from \$870,000 down to \$260,000!

In February 1980, the provisional approval for the development lapsed as the money for headworks charges was not deposited with Council. An auction on the site was advertised by the developer. The advertisement implied that the canal estate was approved, whereas provisional approval had in fact lapsed, as Jim Cash was guick to point out publicly. The auctioneer called off the auction for ethical reasons. In yet another turn-about, the developer re-applied and regained the provisional approval from Harbours & Marine and another auction attempt was made in September 1980. The auction was held at the Only the media and the Gold Coast. environmental lobby turned up. The developer subsequently threatened legal action against the Littoral Society (ALS) for prejudicing his changes of a sale. The land was passed in and ALS found out that the asking price was \$300,000.

Further lobbying continued to three levels of government and out of the blue in August 1981, Mike Ahern (then Minister for Primary Industries) said he was considering acquisition of the site. **Nothing happened.** 

In 1982, the developer re-applied to Council for the rezoning. Jim Cash had by this time been elected onto Maroochy Council and the Culley Council rejected the application. It went to the Local Government Court for a decision. Council's legal advice was that they stood little chance of winning so, in 1983, ten years after the original approval, Council negotiated to buy the site for \$300,000 over 2 years for conservation purposes. Arguably cheaper than the court case! So, the land was secure but its future was not secured. Subsequent Councils could still allow development...

Just to complete the Marina Gardens story with a happy ending, enter Derek Foster, President of the Sunshine Coast Marine Education Group circa 1988, who made representations to Council that the area be set aside as a reserve for education and passive recreation. Council agreed to investigate the benefits to the local community and to the river's ecology. Several State government departments were invited to become joint trustees of the area for \$70,000 each. It took 2 years, but finally the DPI, NP&WS and the Education Department all responded in the negative! Council decided to take the bit between the teeth and the project began to materialize as the Maroochy Wetlands Sanctuary.

The 108ha site, which not so long ago would have been considered a worthless, mosquito ridden swamp, was finally recognized as a precious ecological resource and important Environmental centre. Bilai education Centre officially Education opened in September 1990 – owned by Council and with managed jointly the Education Department and Maroochy Wetland Support Group. It catered for around 5,000 students in its first year of operation and went on to develop a boardwalk for river access and is an area of major ecological importance to Maroochy River."



#### Save Mt Coolum 1985-1990



Mt Coolum (Photograph by John Burrows)

The BIG campaign of this era was of course the Save Mt Coolum campaign, which was formative for the local conservation movement as a co-ordinated campaign.

In September 1985 Maroochy Shire Council gave approval for a radio transmitter, shed and fence on the summit of Mt Coolum. Although this outraged the public, who were not consulted, there was much greater outrage to come and a long five-year battle to protect Mt Coolum began.

Mt Coolum is certainly a distinctive Sunshine Coastland mark, towering over 200 metres above the surrounding coastal plain and formed by volcanic activity around 25 million years ago.

There were fireworks of a different kind in December 1985, when the newly elected Maroochy Council approved in principle a development proposal by Maroochy Corporation It was a very Gold Coast style proposal for a chairlift consisting of "gondola bubbles", each carrying 4- 6 people, travelling by cable across steel pylons to within 25 metres of the summit. On top of the mountain there were to be Perspex wind guards and a high powered telescope, plus other lookouts connected to walking tracts. After such an 'exciting' ride, people would, of course, need to partake of refreshments at a cafeteria, something more substantial at another restaurant perhaps or an event at the major function room. There had to be toilets half way down the mountain after all that tea and coffee, a drinking fountain off the track to prevent further dehydration and a handrail for those with wobbly legs.

Part of the development deal included Council controlled reserves in the old quarry at the base to become a colonial theme park, a 12.5 metre swimming pool, full sized tennis court, ablutions block and carpark separate from the theme part carpark. An adventure centre could offer abseiling, tobogganing, bush craft, hot air ballooning, hang gliding and other activities - a mountain with the lot.

It was a very good deal for the developer who, after the conditions of the development had been met, would receive freehold title to the land.

It was made even more outrageous by the fact that only a few months before, Maroochy Council had supported a proposal for an Environment Park (EP) on Mt Coolum. The State Lands Minister, Bill Glasson, had refused to provide ministerial support for the EP, leaving it as a Recreational Reserve with no protection from further development.

Public opposition to this proposed desecration of the mountain was strongly and consistently stated in the media. A public meeting in Coolum attracted 450 residents and thousands of people signed petitions against the development.

The Save Mt Coolum Committee was formed and SCEC, Yaroomba Progress Association, Fair Go Maroochy and locals worked tirelessly during 1986 and 1987 to try to bring this folly to an end - with a media campaign, walks to the summit, a sticker campaign, badges and a concert.



The environmental significance of Mt Coolum was detailed in a report commissioned by the Save Mt Coolum Committee. For centuries Mt Coolum had been sheltering her botanical treasures that included representatives of 40% of all the fern families living on earth. Strange plants like liverworts, hornworts, lichens and mosses thrived on the rocky outcrops and considerable floral diversity was contained not only on its montane heath summit but also in its small rainforest pockets and woodlands on the lower slopes.

It was home to 586 plants that included two species whose distribution was confined only to the mountain– *Bertya sharpeana* (Mt Coolum Bertya) and the *Allocasuarina thalassoscopica* (Mt Coolum She-Oak) - as well as the rare *Allocasuarina emuina* (Emu Mt She-Oak). There were 78 species of birds supported by the mountain and its surrounds, including migratory birds and a famous pair of peregrine falcons. Although there was plenty of scientific justification, for most people Mt Coolum was quite simply an icon on the Sunshine Coast that they did not want desecrated.



Save Mt Coolum Committee

SCEC and Save Mt Coolum Committee proposed an Environment Park to combine the *mishmash* of different Crown Land reserves in the immediate vicinity of Mt Coolum. As the 1988 local government elections drew closer, Maroochy withdrew its support for the development and recommended to State government that Mt Coolum become a National Park.

It was only after the election of the Goss State government in 1989, with a promise to double the national parks in Queensland, that sanity finally prevailed and Mt Coolum was formally declared a National Park at a ceremony at the mountain on 18<sup>th</sup> November, 1990. Of course, Noel Gardner and Mark Gillett were there to sing their legendary song *Mt Coolum – "Leave the rock for future kids to play"*.

Maroochy Council gave 7ha of its freehold land and a further 11.3ha of Crown Land leasehold was included in the national park. It took several years to get a management plan and some budget for pathways and car parks but the important thing was the national park status.

The scars of the former Council quarry are a reminder of what could have been.

The mountain that has watched over Sunshine Coast for eons is safe wearing its national park mantle with no Council or State government daring to threaten it again...we hope!

The Save Mt Coolum campaign was empowering because it resulted in a victory. It also led directly to the election of two of its members, Gerry Gordon to Maroochy Shire Council, and then Ray Barber to State government in 1989.

In 2024, Mt Coolum attracts 200,000 people a year who mostly walk to its summit. Moves are underway to provide an amenities building and a sealed car park at the entrance to the Mountain.

#### **Tourist developments**

Tourism in the 1980s was the fastest growing industry in the world. By the end of the 1980s Australia tourism was contributing more than agriculture to the economic base for the first time and export earnings from tourism exceed wheat or beef and were fast approaching coal.

Governments at all levels were courting the tourist dollar. Developers of tourist resorts were given special treatment, concessions, trade-offs and fast track legislation by State government. It was even being argued that tourism protects the environment because they wouldn't want to destroy the very natural assets that are their prime drawcards - now would they? Those who wanted any restrictions placed on protection of the natural environment were seen as selfish and negative...

Tourism was a two-edged sword for environmentalists. It would have made a good deal of sense for tourism authorities to get right behind lobbying for national parks instead of artificial attractions, but in the 1980s support was not common from this burgeoning and disparate industry. Tourism and residential development have a recurrent pattern. Initially the pristine natural environment and complex ecosystems are the attraction, then tourism developments are built and pieces of paradise are flogged off, first for speculation and ultimately for residential living.

The rapid growth outstrips the infrastructure delivery and planning capacities of government. The natural environment starts to show signs of degradation, so artificial attractions and then new and more spectacular locations for new developments are proposed. The process is slow and often barely perceptible. Then environmental destruction occurs as a result of a whole series of bad land use decisions.

# (The above was reprinted from *Green Legends,* written in 2008- has anything changed?)

Fortunately, not all of these proposals went ahead. Noosa Parks Association has mounted prolonged opposition to any North Shore development and has worked tirelessly since then to protect these areas with great success. Today Noosa is "branded" by tourism as green. Well, no thanks to governments or the tourist industry are due as the following story shows.

#### Noosa Spit and River Mouth

The following article which appeared in the Noosa Parks Association (NPA) *Friday Forum* email on 6 August 2024 provides an excellent example of how conservationists have to be long term in their vigilance and efforts to protect and enhance natural areas and stay involved to create the best outcomes for the environment. Proposals like Club Med – a \$50million development alienating 22 acres of public land – seem ludicrous now but constant threats to develop hotels, townhouses and tourist infrastructure on the Spit were deadly serious and had to be fought off by conservationists during these times.

As stated in Noosa Parks Association (NPA) *Friday Forum* email on 6 August 2024:

"Camping had occurred in Noosa Woods at the end of Hastings Street for decades before the creation of Noosa Spit. By the 1970s a real estate development created Noosa Sound by removing mangrove forests and turning Hay's Island at the Noosa River mouth into canal estates. In 1976 cyclonic seas broke over the newly created estate so the then Noosa Council allowed the developer to relocate the river mouth 500 metres further west and create Noosa Spit, an extension of Main Beach, to protect the new housing block.



Postcard showing the newly created Noosa Spit, after relocation of the Noosa River mouth. The haul road is visible from Noosa Woods to the river mouth. (Photograph from Noosa Parks Association (NPA) *Friday Forum* 

email on 6 August 2024

Since the early 1980s, in the face of wave after wave of developer proposals to freehold Noosa Spit for development, NPA had been lobbying the Queensland Government to declare all of Noosa Woods as well as Noosa Spit a public recreation reserve under the trusteeship of Noosa Council. As part of its lobbying pitch, NPA gave undertakings that NPA's Greening Noosa arm would progressively extend the littoral rainforest and woodland character of Noosa Woods out onto Noosa Spit. Sections of Noosa's business and tourism sector were outraged, and the future of the Spit remained in limbo.

For the next 10 years Greening Noosa sought to lead by example, initiating planting projects elsewhere. Members chose a different degraded spot each month where it was hoped that locals would take over the project as their own and carry it forward. Sticking mainly to the coast where sand dunes were being denuded, Greening Noosa conducted planting days at Hastings Street, Sunshine Beach, Sunrise Beach, Marcus Beach and Peregian Beach. Planting days were also held at creeks and schools at Cooroy, Pomona, Cooran, Boreen Point, Cootharaba and Cooloothin...

Team leader Glen Gloster lamented, "over time it became apparent that our model was flawed, as few sites continued to thrive for any extended time. We learnt that we needed to act strategically by focussing on a few areas like Noosa Woods, Noosa Spit and the coastal track in Noosa National Park, caring for them year after year."

In 1990 the Playford-led Noosa Council closed and demolished the barbed-wire enclosed camping ground - opening Noosa Woods up to the people. Greening Noosa and Noosa Council held two huge community planting days. Many hundreds of people got down and dirty. Council's nursery and other nurseries supplied the plants, Lions Club provided the food, and there was a celebratory carnival atmosphere with so many locals involved.

In 1996 NPA was granted a Permissive Occupancy permit over the Noosa Parks Association Park on the southern side of the old Noosa Spit Haul Road visible in the postcard picture opposite. This was to extend the littoral rainforest and woodland from Noosa Woods out into the Noosa Spit and to stymie further attempts to develop the Spit or the Hastings Street Association's aspirations to see it turned into car parking. Our area was extended in 2000... Greening Noosa has maintained and enhanced the natural environment on Noosa Spit for more than 30 years and volunteers are welcome."



#### **Maroochy River Mouth**

#### It is interesting to contrast this with the "sand spit" on Maroochy's southern shores...

A Wharf and Water Reserve had been established in 1893, that was gazetted for Camping and Recreational purposes in 1915. By 1960 the Cotton Tree Caravan Park was established on this erosion prone sand spit under Council management. An Erosion-prone zone was declared but (was and still is) occupied by campers.

This, combined with a complete lack of coastal management, had produced badly degraded sand dunes that offered little hope of fulfilling their natural functions of holding down the sand and keeping the sea off the land in storms. Maroochy Shire Council had even allowed a *joy-riding* business to operate where people paid to ride vehicles with big balloon tyres all over the sand dunes. In 1979 Churinga was replanting this dunal area along with many other sites with volunteers growing and planting the native species.

Many more dramas associated with the Maroochy River mouth with VERY active SCEC involvement are yet to come, but how different things might have been or perhaps could become ... just imagine if...

Maroochy River mouth is a reserve for all the people, the sand dunes are re-clothed with their littoral vegetation, there are walking paths and it is available to all as a peaceful place of nature. It can also fulfil its protective function for the land better than concrete. In time some small lagoons might develop behind the dunes. This is what happens if nature is not drained and channelled.

#### **Pumicestone Passage**

A 1982 Pumicestone Passage study had clearly stated the value of the Passage as habitat for fish breeding:

"... the Passage consists primarily of habitat zones supporting juvenile and adult fish which provide the basis for recreational and commercial fisheries in the Passage and also in other parts of Moreton Bay. The northern section of the Passage between Bell's Creek and Caloundra Bar is one of the principal areas in South East Queensland utilised for the spawning run of Bream (Acanthropagrus australia) during the winter months... Disturbance of the spawning grounds at Caloundra can thus be expected to affect not only the recreational fishery at Caloundra but a much wider range of fishing activities elsewhere in Moreton Bay; a threat to the bream stocks at Caloundra is a threat to South East Queensland bream fisheries."

The dredging of similar habitat in the Tweed and Mooloolah Rivers was associated with the collapse of most of the bream fishery of those areas.

WPSQ Caloundra had a few battles of enormous environmental significance on its plate during the 1980s. There were two separate proposals to stabilise, fill and develop the northern end of the Passage for commercial gain. Despite a previous engineering assessment in 1971 that stabilising the bar was not practical, a new proposal emerged in 1981 by a private developer to build a marina for 300 boats and a Polynesian style accommodation complex on approximately 15ha of dredged sand with the obligatory rock walls. Although it received support from the relevant Minister, the local MLA Mike Ahern, the Landsborough Shire Council, the Shire Engineer plus the local Chamber of Commerce – the concept plan failed to gain traction.

Then on 30 April 1984, a State Cabinet meeting was held at Caloundra and stabilising the bar was again on the agenda. The Member for Landsborough, Mike Ahern, was reported as recommending to Maritime Services Minister Mr Goleby that walls be built to stabilise the shifting Caloundra bar. This time the emphasis was on the construction of training walls and a 370 metre groyne east from Deep Water point at Happy Valley with a 'possible' marina at Golden Beach. The restoration was aimed mainly at beach reclamation at Kings Beach and Happy Valley. The Caloundra Chamber of Commerce formed а Caloundra Bar Stabilisation Committee to advocate the benefits to Council, which forwarded the proposal to the Department of Harbours and Marine for comment...

A meeting with Maritime Services Minister, John Goleby, was held with WPSQ Caloundra representatives who later reported that Mr Goleby's first question, after being handed the written submission, was 'What has the stabilisation of the Caloundra bar got to do with the Wildlife Preservation Society?'

Attempts to refer to the Co-ordinator General's Coastal Management Investigation were met with accusations of quoting out of context. Mentions of dredging were brushed aside with comments that there was no proof that it led to beach erosion... In May 1985, after a long and bitter guarrel with conservationists and Gold Coast residents, the Gold Coast Waterway Authority announced that the tender to stabilise the Southport bar had been won for \$22 million. This had required approval by State Cabinet and involved 4,500,000 cubic metres of dredging, one million tonnes of rock placement and construction and placement of 40,000 cubic metres of concrete in cubes for breakwater protection. The 18 month project involved deepening and widening existing channels and filling in others, creating a new entrance across the Spit and constructing breakwater and retaining walls...

Amazingly another proposal to tame the Caloundra bar was to surface in March 1987. The *Sunshine Coast Daily* reported that a deputation headed by Landsborough Shire Chairman, Jack Beausang, was seeking a meeting with Maritime Services Minister, Martin Tenni, and Lands Minister, Bill Glasson, to have a survey done to establish the feasibility of stabilising the bar...

The Caloundra Chamber of Commerce supported the proposal, predicting that Caloundra would establish itself as a game fishing port and that everyone would win from the additional real estate created. This time the project was estimated to cost between \$30 million and \$40 million and State government was not about to commit such a large amount of money, which effectively sank the proposal...

Human memory is so short. Some people still think it sounds like a good idea to tame the bar. Like the eternal cycle of the tides another bright sparkly proposal to train nature is sure to surface some time, but hopefully data collection and advanced computer simulations can save the day if needed..."

(Reprinted from Piece by Piece published by WPSQ 2022)

There was the beginning of a massive canal estate (called *Pelican Waters* in 2024) that WPSQ even went to Court to try to stop, but this was on private not public land and went ahead.

In August 1989 Estaurine Research Group (ERG), WPSQ Caloundra and Caboolture, SCEC, Bribie Island Protection Association (BIEPA), together with Caloundra and Caboolture Shire Councils held a major forum. The agenda was far reaching, with speakers from tourism, development, forestry, local government, commercial fishing, amateur fishing and ecosystems.

A strong campaign that SCEC and WPSQ Caloundra worked on in the 1980s was to prevent a so-called "satellite city" being developed west of Caloundra. The Emanuel Group of companies (Australia's largest residential developer at the time) owned 26,000ha (64,247ac) on Bribie Island and the mainland, purchased from Amcor (formerly Australian Paper Mills).

The proposal was for the single largest residential development to be undertaken in Australia at the time, to cover approximately one-third of Bribie Island and the area that became known as Caloundra Downs near Beerwah. It was proposed to house 200,000 people and included a satellite city around a canal estate and underwater tunnel to Bribie Island, an industrial centre and a private university. Golf courses and marinas were also being discussed as part of the plans.

Fortunately, it required approval under the Foreign Takeovers Act and Federal Member for Fisher Michael Lavarch, who was not impressed, pushed for a full environmental impact study prior to any further steps being taken.

There were several rounds of the "battle" before the proposal appeared to fade away.

A promised national park in the catchment has sadly still not eventuated since being first proposed in the 1980s. Some things do not really "go away" but come again and this land in 2024 has become the massive *Aura* development, which one could certainly call a developing "satellite city" – actively facilitated by the State government.

#### **Maroochy River North Shore**



As far back as 1955, Queensland National Parks & Wildlife Service had been recommending that the whole of Reserve 301 (R301) on Maroochy's north shore be given conservation tenure. A succession of National Party governments gave them no hearing.

The landscape at the river mouth was a complex natural web of wetlands, shifting sand dunes, littoral rainforest and a small hardwood forest. It contained six maior plant communities that were some of the last intact remnants of vegetation types once widespread on the Sunshine Coast. Because of this diversity, the area supported a huge spectrum of native wildlife that included Eastern grey kangaroos, as well as being important bird habitat and a roosting area for wading and migratory birds.

A major government study commissioned by the Coordinator General's Department had recognized the importance of mangrove wetlands in coastal ecology, especially in the breeding cycle of fish, prawns and mud crabs. There was no area of comparable importance along the Maroochy foreshores. Archaeological investigations also revealed a relatively rich record of First Nation Peoples occupation the area. Five sites were discovered consisting mainly of both shell middens and stone artefact scatters.

The Moreton Region Growth Strategy Investigations (1974-76) had also identified R301 as an area for conservation and passive outdoor recreation but successive State government did nothing to protect the area from future development.

The Director of Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service wrote to Maroochy Council on 10 March 1981 saying that "...together we can work toward making it (R301) as important to the area and as big a tourist magnet as Noosa National Park is to Noosa or Burleigh Heads National Park is to the Gold Coast."

Waiting in the wings however was a development company that owned freehold land adjoining R301 and which had designs on the Crown Land reserve. In the early 1980s the developer had proposed to develop 157ha (388ac) of residential subdivision with traditional (horizontal) canals and a series of quays on their own freehold land adjoining R301. No doubt they had been watching with interest while the drawn out saga of *Marina Gardens* canal estate had unfolded.

One of the main sticking points was that the developers wanted ocean access and that complex hydraulic modelling had to be done.

The developer also proposed pumping secondary treated sewerage into the river estuary on the outgoing tide! Negotiations culminated in a Court case, involving Paul O'Donnell (SCEC) and the Queensland Conservation Council. Approval was given to the development with conditions that included a passive weir instead of direct ocean access... District Ranger, Ron Turner from Queensland National Parks & Wildlife Service visited SCEC in an official capacity and was probably the only public servant to ever do so in this era.

With SCEC's urging and Ron's intermediary assistance, the outgoing Culley-led Maroochy Shire Council approached State government in 1984 to have the whole of R301 gazetted as Environmental Park.

SCEC cranked up the media releases and Maroochy Wildlife Preservation Society held a wetland wade through the proposed development site on R301.

Fred Murray had stated that there are no mangroves on the development area so it was interesting that the waders found most of the proposed lagoon area covered in mangroves. But the wheels and deals were being greased and eventually in 1987 support for the proposal was rushed through Maroochy Council. There was no public debate, no public objection and no display of plans allowed. The same Council that had supported the Environment Park gave its consent to the encroachment onto R301 for private development, without allowing the public any opportunity for input or objection. Within two weeks, Cabinet gave approval, in what was undoubtedly а cynical example of Queensland's fast track approval system.

Cr Murray said that speed was necessary because the developers had money burning a hole in their pockets. To avoid the possibility of objectors taking the case to the Land Court, a Ministerial Rezoning was given to the developer. The Minister ignored more than 4,300 objections, the town planning studies, and expert environmental opinion that included his own government's Coastal Management Investigation study.

No reasons were given and no further correspondence was to be entered into. However, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was to be done post hoc! In the aftermath of the 1987 collapse of the Australian stock market, Interwest, the second developer, also went into receivership but work proceeded in April 1989 and the Twin Waters resort was opened in time for the Christmas 1990 holiday season.

SCEC continued to work with Council, developers and locals to reach a compromise to ensure that as much of the land, including the vital mangroves, went into protected status as the suburb of Twin Waters unfolded next door.

This was a saga that continued into the 1990s when State government gave away further Crown Land to connect Twin Waters resort and the future residential estate with a golf course. It was a fait accompli that Council could only rubber-stamp. The pleas of SCEC and their only Sunshine Coast MLA, Ray Barber, to keep what was left of the north shore for the people were ignored.

(Reprinted from Green Legends, SCEC publication 2008)



Clearing the site for the Twin Waters development on the Maroochy River's North Shore, 1988 (Photograph: Picture Sunshine Coast - Sunshine Coast Council.)

#### The Conondales

Forestry issues were high on the conservation agenda in the early 1980s. Following what has been called the *rainforest wars* in northern New South Wales in 1979 (over logging of rainforests of Terania Creek), where protesters physically defended the forest with barricades, (pioneering a campaign of environmental nonviolent resistance) the phenomenon of *forest protectors* was born. It was a highly successful campaign that by 1982 led to promised national parks of 900,000ha (2,223,948ac) of northern NSW native forests and eventually the end of rainforest logging in NSW.

However, on the Sunshine Coast in this era the Queensland Forestry Department was still clear-felling native forest around Pomona and in the Conondale Ranges in order to plant exotic pines...



Forestry in Conondale. (Photograph by John Burrows)

The Save the Conondale Range Committee (SCRC) was formed in 1976 following a lot of scientific interest in frogs and threats to their habitat from logging in rainforest areas. A 1,740ha (4,299ac) national park was declared in 1977 which contained some rainforest areas, but it was really a token. Further lobbying by SCRC for a larger area was ignored and in 1979, Forestry announced that it was going to build a new road and log the Booloumba Creek catchment.

It was the Daintree battle come to the Conondales in November, 1981, when blasting for the new road began. All the major Australian conservation groups came for a protest camp set up at Charlie Moreland Park and gained the attention of national newspapers and TV.

The Queensland Labor Party was then in opposition and joined in the protest. The call was for a three-year moratorium on logging while a Fauna Study was carried out. Although the rare frog, the Southern Gastric Brooding Frog (*Rheobatrachus silus*) once living in the Conondales had not been seen since 1979 and were presumed extinct, the whole area was a major habitat for rare and endangered flora, fauna and birds.

The Conondale Range Committee (CRC) had a new name in 1982 and a new slogan 'Don't Log the Frog,' a cry to save the gastric-brooding frog.



Juvenile Contemplating Leaving Mother! (Photograph from *The Gastric Brooding Frog* edited by Michael J Tyler, published 1983 by Croom Helm, London, P.40)

Early CRC members included Heather Petersen (Harford), Lutz Petersen, Robin and Gary Lawler and Steve Hall. Heather somehow managed to get hold of Joh Bjelke Petersen's home phone number and all because she spelled her surname the same way as Joh's, and after a discussion about family origins, Joh agreed to a meeting. Subsequently he agreed to the Fauna Study at the same time as logging continued! It was agreed that Boloumba Gorge would be set aside for an Environmental Park, probably because it was too steep to log. Scientists working on the Fauna Study discovered several new species including two species of freshwater crayfish.

Richard Giles became an actual paid Project Officer of the CRC from 1980 – 1985, during which time he also ran a memorable local alternative newspaper called the *Sunshine News*. The issue became very polarized between jobs for loggers and conservation interests in the Sunshine Coast media.

The CRC produced a report in September 1983 called *Preliminary Examination of Employment Opportunities in the Conondale Ranges.* Richard Giles was pivotal in this report to try to counteract the flak about jobs and local livelihoods from logging with facts and figures.

Richard's research showed that it was a case of big business buying out smaller mills, shutting them down and taking their timber quotas that was actually putting locals out of work. The CRC did not support a blockade or taking action against timber workers and so another group formed and began taking direct action – blockading the timber mill at Cooroy.

In NSW there were serious attacks on greenies but mostly it was a media beat-up and only isolated incidents of personal abuse occurred. In the late 1980s, Astrik Resources gained approval to re-open an old gold mine on Booloumba Creek, despite Forestry opposition.



Long term CRC President, Ian Mackay, wrote:

"At a cost of nearly a million dollars, an electricity line was taken in through the forest, the cyanide tailings dam built, the mine pit dug and a treatment plant built. All this in an area which had recorded the highest 24 hour rainfall in South East Queensland."

(Thanks to Walking on the Wilder Side... in the Conondales, Conondale Range Committee, 2004 and also Take a Walk in South-East Queensland by John and Lyn Daly for this information.)

SCEC and CRC Project Officer Mark Ricketts claimed that for every 30sq cm of gold obtained from the open cut mine, 8,000sq m of earth had to be removed. It was massive clearing and even more threatening to the ecological balance of the area than logging and Bundaroo was the only unlogged creek in the district.

To remove the ore, the plan involved 25-tonne trucks passing through the small town of Kenilworth four times an hour for six days a week. A serendipitous accident occurred near Kilcoy *en-route* to the mine where drums of cyanide fell off a truck. Two drums burst open and if it had rained, lethal gases would have been liberated.

It was the end of the proposal and soon afterwards, in 1989, Astrik declared bankruptcy, but not without leaving their toxic mark deep in the Conondales. The water in the open cut pit was highly acidified and contaminated with heavy metals. A bond of only \$20,000 had been taken. When the gold mining company went into receivership, SCEC and the CRC lobbied for State government rehabilitate the funds to legacy of environmental degradation that included a tailings dam contaminated with cyanide. It was to cost more than \$1million to rehabilitate. The campaign for the Conondales was to continue into the 1990s.



The pristine Bundaroo Creek (Photograph John Burrows)

#### Time for some Fun

SCEC initiated a fundraiser and fun-raiser called the Bunya Beat Ball in 1988 and popular musicians Barry Charles, RAM, The Hinterland Band and Andy Tainsh were big drawcards. In 1989 the second one coincided with State Election Night. A marquee was set up outside the Verrierdale hall with a TV to follow the election results.

The National Party government had governed as a coalition since 1957, then in its own right since 1983. The landslide election win for Labor in 1989, which gained more than 50% of the primary vote, was the beginning of a new era in so many ways, especially for the environment.

As the decade of the 1980s closed, the movement was growing in strength and influence and the environment was firmly on the political agenda. SCEC and its Member Groups were a force to be reckoned with.

## Chapter 10 Coming of Age

In many ways the 1990s were a most productive time for SCEC and the conservation movement.

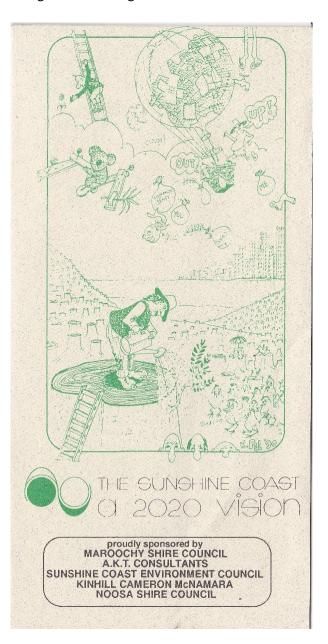
SCEC made a particular effort to balance the "negative" anti-development image bestowed by some people with its own positive initiatives. Several major conferences, events and projects were convened during the 1990s. These engaged the general public, reached out to the development industry, broadened contacts with traditional adversaries, and most of all provided a forum for community discussion.

SCEC was a great focus for social as well as campaign activities and during the 1990s both its volunteer and its membership base widened - along with the scope of environmental activities. The list of SCEC Member Groups had swelled to 50.

#### **2020** Vision Conference

Held in November 1990, this was a ground breaking conference in terms of its format. Determined not to make it a "talk-fest", Mark Ricketts and Elaine Green devised an agenda that was unusual for the time.

Experts wrote discussion papers that were distributed to participants before the conference on the topics of: Human Needs (Leeroy Gibb The Meeting Place); Water Quality and Sewage (Cr. Hermann Schwabe); Town Planning (Trish Ferrier, Brisbane City Council); Clean Air and Waste Disposal (David McNichol Maroochy Shire Health Officer); Sustainable Agriculture (Mick Capelin, DPI); Sustainable Economy (Joe Ruiz Avila AKT Consultants); Tourism (Barbara Luft, Sunshine Tourism), Conservation (Mike Ritchie, Brisbane Strategy Group), Transport and Urban Design (Tony Long, Schomburgk and Long). People attended workshops in their chosen area of interest at 3 separate sessions and after further discussion arrived at a list of priorities. Each group was led by a trained facilitator to ensure that everyone had their say. By the time people sat down for the plenary session, these lists of priorities had been typed out, copied and put on everyone's seat. This enabled an informed debate about their merits and at the end an agreed-upon list of recommendations was generated and given to the media.



# Maroochy Conservation Strategy (1990 – 1991)

Brainchild of SCEC Project Officer Mark Ricketts, this was probably the first attempt to compile a natural resources inventory based on computerised cadastral (property) maps. Joe Ruiz Avila's recycling company AKT funded the initial work and over 400 nominations were received from the public of *places they valued*. The mapping work was taken up by Maroochy Shire Council and it was influential in initiating similar mapping projects.



#### **Green Dinners**

The monthly SCEC Green Dinners were initiated in 1991. These were designed to involve Member Groups who generally hosted the evening as a fundraiser with a guest speaker highlighting a current environmental issue. It was a winning formula of interesting food, music and conversation and continued for several years. Lyn Dickenson and Helen Hutchinson stand out as caterers for many SCEC events over this time.

#### **Population Growth**

SCEC continually highlighted the social, environmental and economic effects of population growth. SCEC President Joe Ruiz Avila and Robert Wrigley produced a paper called An Anatomy of the Socio Economic Climate on the Sunshine Coast: What has Relentless Growth given the Sunshine Coast?

Joe presented the paper to Maroochy Shire Council before a gallery of supporters. The analysis pointed out the facts that the Sunshine Coast had one of the highest levels of unemployment as well as growth in Australia, saying:

"We have created a society with virtually the worst of all worlds, on the basis that a subsidised building and development frenzy would give the population wealth and ability. We have incurred on a population ratio, municipal debts far in excess of virtually any other district and received a fable in return. Regional councils cannot continue to lure unfortunate victims to this community in the full knowledge that they simply cannot be economically sustained."

#### (Has anything changed in 2024?)

During the 1990s, SCEC and its Member Groups continually drew attention to the effects of population growth - which included water supply, sewerage management, diminishing natural areas and the effects of building new roads on the environment.

#### Water supply

In October 1991, Sunshine Coast residents read in their daily papers: A \$100 million dam will be built in the Sunshine Coast hinterland to cater for a projected massive population explosion. Six potential sites had been shortlisted, with absolutely no public consultation, to tap the waters of either the lower Obi Obi River or the Mary River near Kenilworth, drowning farmlands and roads. The Baroon Pocket Dam had been planned in the early 1980s to meet demand for water until 2010, but population growth demanded more water.



Baroon Pocket dam under construction (Photograph source unknown)

A high profile campaign by conservationists and residents did lead to the government dropping the Upper Mary River dam proposals in April 1993. The debate about dams also led to serious consideration of water conservation measures and as a result Maroochy introduced water meters.



Water from Baroon was treated at Landershute Water Treatment Plant

A turbine was installed in a tunnel, to Landershute Water Treatment Plant, which generates power equivalent to powering 400 homes, which was advanced technology for the time.

#### Sewerage

Sewerage treatment was very basic even in the 1990s and there were often spills into Petrie Creek. Maleny's sewage went into the Obi Obi Creek and directly into Baroon Pocket dam. There were several outbreaks of algal blooms in the dam and SCEC campaigned for upgraded sewerage treatment to improve the health of the waterways.

Jenifer Simpson started a SCEC committee which she called the Effluent Society in 1992 and took on the role of SCEC's Project Officer for water issues. Jenifer pointed out that effluent is the only resource that increases with population growth and that it ought to be better utilised. The science of re-use was in its infancy in the 1990s and Jenifer travelled the world to expand her knowledge. Her conviction that effluent could be treated to a high enough standard to become potable water was at the time controversial and treatment standards were not high enough to protect the environment or allow re-use - a situation that gradually improved during the 1990s.

In her SCEC role Jenifer convened a water forum called **UP the Spout and Down the Drain** to encourage discussion on these issues.



Jenifer Simpson

#### **Catchment Care**

Barung Landcare started in 1989 and as awareness of the importance of catchment care grew in the 1990s, a number of groups were formed.

The Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee (MRCCC) advanced the then pioneering concept of whole of catchment management and a committee with representatives from major stakeholders in the river system. It was a non-regulatory and cooperative approach that worked towards developing a Catchment Management Strategy to improve the health of the catchment in 1996.

Noosa and District Landcare began operating as a community not-for-profit group in 1991 to support environmental restoration in the Noosa area.

Lake Baroon Catchment Care Group formed in 1992 with support from AquaGen (the dam managers at the time). The group emphasised on-ground works, education and awareness programs. Practical measures such fencing off creeks from cattle and planting reduced sediment and nitrogen going into the dam. The Maroochy River Catchment Area Network (MRCAN) was formed in 1992 and a community Waterwatch program collected data on tributaries to the Maroochy River for the first time in a consistent manner. This group evolved into ECOcollaboration.

Noosa Integrated Catchment Association (NICA) was set up in 1996 and developed the first Noosa River Catchment Strategy.

The Mooloolah River Waterwatch was established in 1997 to monitor and enhance water quality. The group became Mooloolah River Landcare and now operates a native plant nursery.

The Petrie Creek Catchment Care Group was formed in 1998 as concern grew for the health of Petrie Creek and its ecosystem. From the headwaters at Hunchy on the slopes of the Blackall Range down to Nambour, this group has made a major contribution to stabilising land slips and creek banks and vastly improving water quality, so that in 2024 it is a major stronghold for the platypus.



Other groups that formed included the Coolum and North Shore Coast Care group in 1998 and later community groups caring for their local waterways, including Currimundi Creek and Tooway Lake. The success of these community-based groups is evident in the fact that all still exist in 2024 and in the improvements to water quality, weed reduction and bank stability that they have brought about in Sunshine Coast waterways.

### Unemployment

There is no doubting the fact that unemployment, especially youth unemployment, was too high in the 1990s. Although there was an Australia-wide recession in 1991-1992 and national unemployment rates around 10%, on the Sunshine Coast, SCEC was often blamed in the media for being anti-jobs.

*Eco Echo* editor Mark Warnick wrote:

"SCEC rejects this outright. The environment movement and some forward thinking Councillors have always had sustainable job creation and maintenance as part of their platform. It is by first learning about what we do have left of the natural world, then respecting it, then caring for it that drives the environment movement to be constantly looking for positive, creative work that both meets people's physical needs and maintains the delicate yet astonishing biodiversity balance of life... the environment movement will not dilute is ideals and aims for the highest quality of life for all life forms both now and for future generations and we will continue to be pro-active in worthwhile job creations schemes...".

### LEAP

SCEC ran a LEAP (Landcare and Environment Action Program) scheme as a demonstration of sustainable employment, which began in March 1993. It was an ambitious project, coordinated by Ray Marx, to engage 120 people aged 15 to 20, over 12 months. Training and education were part of the program which aimed to heal some of the scars and degraded landscapes of the region. There were 10 supervisors overseeing the restoration works and the following projects were done in collaboration with Forestry and other government departments:

**Beerburrum**: Working with Queensland Forest Service in the Beerburrum, Mooloolah and Beerwah areas

Yandina: Planting cleared areas of Cooloolabin Forest, propagating native trees and restoring land slip areas on the slopes of Mt Ninderry (The plant nursery at Yandina also supplied trees for planting along the Sunshine Motorway)

**Noosa North Shore**: Weed eradication, rubbish removal and revegetation for a proposed Wildlife Release Area

**Mudjimba**: Weed eradication, rubbish removal, revegetation of the EP and planting of mangroves on Maroochy River banks

**Maleny**: Revegetating the slopes of Baroon Pocket Dam, weeding and replanting along creeks leading into the dam...

**Kenilworth Bluff**: Planting native trees along a 4km walking track to the bluff to convert a four -wheel drive track into a walking track

**Pomona/Noosa**: Revegetation, landscaping and creek rehabilitation at Cooroora Creek Park and extension of a wildlife corridor to link a State forest area with a NP; eradication of camphor laurel, replacement with rainforest species and stabilising a land slip area

**Picnic Creek**: (near Kondalilla NP) Rehabilitation of a heavily weed infested creek with local native species

**Peregian/Emu Swamp**: Weed eradication in the EP; a flora and fauna survey undertaken by participants with training in the methods used.

The LEAP scheme enabled the planting of more than 50,000 trees across the region and secured a contract to grow 96,000 plants for the Sunshine Motorway.



LEAP participants (names unknown) above at the LEAP Nursery at Yandina



Jeni de Hayre LEAP photographer with participants

### **Growth Conference**

The **Growth Conference** was organised by SCEC in February 1994. Keynote speaker was Mike Berwick, Chairman of the Douglas Shire who introduced the controversial issue of "capping" population growth.

Other topics explored in workshops were Waste Disposal (Drew Hutton), Relentless Growth (Joe Ruiz Avila), Water Management (Jenifer Simpson), Town Planning (Chris Schomburgk), Livability (Lindsay Clare) and Governance (Jill Jordan).



Jill Jordan

In true democratic style (i.e. giving people token money to spend on each agreed "solution") these were prioritised and reported back in the conference papers along with summaries of the speeches given.

A special effort was made to give youth a say and their conference paper was *Tomorrow's Citizens*:

"As representatives of the youth sector, we have been given an opportunity to speak at the 1994 Growth Conference. Essentially, we have been given a free rein, a chance for us to actually talk for ourselves about the issues we are concerned about. For this conference we have chosen to investigate how well our politicians are living up to the expectations of today's youth in the environmental field...a Green Test – it has been dubbed by some. The standard for this Green Test has been a survey of current Year 12 students from Sunshine Coast high schools on what they want done to manage our environment. By sending a survey of a slightly different format, we gave our politicians a chance to tell their views and match themselves against this criteria."

The youth participants took their role very seriously, saying that they "...appreciated the chance to have a serious voice at an important conference, an all too rare opportunity these days."

#### **Vegetation Clearance Summit**



In 1996 SCEC hosted a **Vegetation Clearance Summit** at Nambour Civic Centre. It was convened because of a report by Dr Carla Catterall from Griffith University that had highlighted the extent of land clearing across South East Queensland. Sixty four percent of the study area had already been cleared.

The Sunshine Coast had the worst record in the SEQ region with 2,000ha (4,942ac) of bushland lost since 1994. Dr Catterall predicted that all remnant bushland below 60m elevation (coastal) would be gone within 70 years unless protected. Lowlands (60m to 160m elevation) were identified as having distinct flora and fauna, migratory birds and once common animals becoming rarer such as koalas and gliders. These were most at risk with few representatives of lowlands in the parks system.

Simply put the land with the lowest risk of clearing had the highest protection while land at the highest risk had the lowest protection. Land in private ownership had to be purchased and the compensation system was a major disincentive to "downgrading" land to conservation status.

The Brisbane City Council had imposed a green levy in 1990 to assist the purchase of environmentally sensitive land and used Vegetation Protection Orders supported by changes to its town plan to protect strategic remnant bushland. A list of recommendations was made at the summit and a follow up workshop explored further prioritisation of efforts to reduce bushland clearing.

SCEC continued to highlight pre-emptive clearing - happening before development applications were submitted - and to lobby for tree protection bylaws.

#### **Other events**

A close relationship between Member Group Queensland Folk Federation (organisers of Maleny Folk Festival, now Woodford Festival) had existed since the 1980s. Musicians such as Noel Gardner and Mark Gillett were popular at many SCEC events. Des Ritchie was a driving force in initiating *The GREENhouse* at Maleny Folk Festival in 1993. Jan Tilden was the original coordinator and it exposed a wide audience to environmental issues. It continued after the Festival moved to Woodford and gained a greater following every year.

*Eco Eco* Editor Jillian Rossiter took on coordination of The GREENhouse program in 2000 and continued until 2010-11, growing it into a major part of the Festival, attracting some well-known speakers and taking environmental issues to a wider audience.



Des Ritchie and Jillian Rossiter outside the GREENhouse at Woodford Folk Festival

In May 1995 *Go Mooloolaba* Chamber of Commerce asked SCEC to join a panel of greenies vs developers at the **Great Debate:** Liveability – is this a threatened species on the Sunshine Coast?

It was held at the Big Pineapple and well attended by both sides of the debate which was basically on population growth. Prof. Paul Thomas from the University of the Sunshine Coast chaired the traditional style debating program. Representing the environment were SCEC President Joe Ruiz Avila, Noosa Councillor Heather Melrose and community advocate and poet Ian Mackay. Rod Tate, Daphne Clement Bill and Freeman represented the development industry. It attracted lots of local publicity and drew attention to the ongoing destruction of the natural environment to accommodate growth. The result was declared a draw!

Jillian Rossiter also instigated a weekly column called **Eco lines** in the Sunshine Coast Daily in 1994, both writing and coordinating contributors. Environmental issues were certainly getting out there in the mainstream community in the 1990s.

Other SCEC events included a **Taming the Wastestream** conference spearheaded by Darryl Fry and **Don't** take the Wrap in **partnership with Franklins Supermarket** which drew attention to the inadequate state of waste management.

### Sunshine Coast Environment Awards

Joe Ruiz Avila was a colourful and active President of SCEC from 1993 – 1997. He originated the Sunshine Coast Environment Awards in 1994 to highlight positive initiatives being undertaken by schools, individuals, the community and various industries. It was a lot of work to secure sponsorship, publicise and timeline the entries and judging, but the Awards gained support from the Sunshine Coast community. The Awards became known as the *Froggies* because of the wonderful pewter frog that enhanced the wooden award.



High profile people were involved as presenters and SCEC highlighted many positive actions being taken across the region instead of just the negatives. It also helped to reach the development industry and the farming community by showcasing the good initiatives and supporting young environmentalists. The Awards continued for more than a decade.



And the 1997 Environment Award goes to... Petrie Creek Revegetation Group- (L to R) Back: Garry Lawler, Helen Hutchinson, Cr Robin Dunn, Max Dunn and front: John and Heather Thompson

### Consultation

The Labor State government had made an election promise in 1989 to "manage" population growth. During the 1990s this initially took the form of a complicated consultation process called SEQ2001 that went for several years.

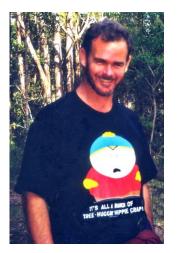
Des Ritchie was SCEC's representative and after literally years of attending meetings and forums in Brisbane, he summed up the process:

"For political reasons, the Goss Government did not define or defend 'growth' before spending three years analysing how to plan and manage it. This was an act of treason against the future of SEQ because we have adopted, by omission, a high population growth model for the area and steadfastly set ourselves on course to become the other Los Angeles of the Pacific."

The 1990s were a time when governments increasingly "consulted" with environment and community groups. This was certainly overdue but it did require considerable people resources to participate. SCEC was represented on the Caloundra City Environment Advisory Committee, CAMCOS Caboolture to Maroochy Corridor Study, Maroochy Shire Waste Management Advisory Group, Mary River Catchment Co-ordinating Committee, Baroon Pocket Catchment Care, Maroochy/Mooloolah Catchment Care Committee, Catchment Noosa River Coordinating Committee, Pumicestone Passage Catchment Coordinating Committee, Mary River and North Coast Farm Forestry Committee as well as other ephemeral groups during the 1990s.

These were empowering times and SCEC was an opinion leader on environmental and planning issues in the 1990s. It was also a time when volunteerism was at its zenith. A wide range of people volunteered their most precious commodity – time – for SCEC and brought about change.

Project Officer Mark Ricketts had a knack with the media. He continually pointed out that the true costs of development were not being met by developers and that there was absolutely no thought of making provision for future environmental needs.



Left: SCEC Project Officer Mark Ricketts (wearing one of his typical t-shirtsshowing his irreverent sense of humour)



Sand groynes at the Maroochy River mouth (Photograph by John Burrows)

### **1990s Major Campaigns**

An uninformed proposal by a Maroochy Shire Councillor in 1992 to "stabilise" the **Maroochy River** mouth led to enormous public backlash. People simply did not want to see rock walls on Maroochy's estuary. The original proposal was reversed but it did lead to State government investigations into sand groynes to control erosion and protect Council "assets" like the caravan park on the sand spit.

Two major fish kills, in 1993 and 1994, led to increased community support for a 'living' river and greater awareness and control of agricultural chemicals. The Maroochy River Catchment Area Network, which had 30 trained Waterwatch volunteers, initiated a rapid response kit to help people to handle incidents and take water samples. SCEC held a summit on Chambers Island that brought together fishers, farmers, surfers, politicians and community. Out of these crises, changes were made.

This was certainly not the end of the story and the Maroochy River became a battle ground on several more occasions. Jim Cash led the charge for SCEC due to his extensive knowledge about the area and the ecosystem. In 1994-5 the first sand-filled geotextile groynes were placed but did not eliminate erosion. Fear was whipped up about the inevitable break-through south of Pincushion Island (although the river mouth had oscillated in this way since time immemorial).

In 2001 two additional groynes were placed around the caravan park and two reinforced concrete jetties were built out from Cotton Tree to reduce the influence of tidal currents on the river banks and loss of sand from beaches.

SCEC had been involved in trying to get Mudjimba Island (Old Woman Island) into national park since the early 1990s. Knowing that the private lease was due to expire in 1998, conservationists fought off various proposals including one by the Hyatt for helicopter rides to the island. There were infestations of weeds and no management at all so SCEC agitated to make the island an Environment Park and the surrounding coral reefs a Marine Park. Finally, in **1998, when the** lease expired, Mudjimba Island was added to the Maroochy River Conservation Park.

The island's abundant coral reefs support 11 different families of hard and soft coral and its land hosts a colony of around 4,000 Wedge-tailed Shearwaters (*Puffinus pacificus*) that visit each year to safely breed away from domestic and feral animals and helicopters. This colony is very important as it is the only viable colony remaining in South East Queensland and one of only two colonies that inhabit mainland islands in Queensland.

As global travellers, the birds travel widely to places such as Antarctica, Japan, New Zealand and Siberia, returning to the place they were born at age 4 to breed.

Maroochy River Conservation Park, covering 174ha (430ac) was gazetted in 1992 and included not only the mangrove and saltmarsh areas along Maroochy River, but also Goat and Channel Islands in the river estuary.

SCEC campaigned for the adoption by all the Sunshine Coast Councils of Green Levies. Caloundra City Council brought in a \$2 per ratepayer levy in 1991 that in reality did little. Noosa introduced a specific \$50 levy for conservation in 1995 to acquire environmentally significant lands. The first attempt to bring in a levy in Maroochy did not attract the support of the majority of Councillors. Another attempt in 1996 was defeated but a \$20 levy was finally introduced in 1998.

### **Regional Forests Agreement (RFA)**

In 1996 the Federal government started the RFA process in an effort to legally settle forest allocations for timber and conservation in SEQ. Lead agents Dr Aila Keto (Australian Rainforest Conservation Society) and The Wilderness Society were supported by SCEC, CRC and other groups.

SCEC played a pivotal role in 1999 when Greg Woods and his partner Fiona organised the **Green Train** from the Sunshine Coast to Brisbane where a huge rally was held at King George Square.

The agreement that was signed between conservation groups, the timber industry and State government won 425,000ha (1,050,198ac) of State Forest (including Conondales, Mapleton and Bellthorpe) for nature reserves.

As John and Lyn Daly explained in their book-Take a Walk in South-East Queensland:

"After one of the most consistent, hardfought campaigns in Queensland's history, the extended Conondale National Park was officially announced in July 1992. It was enlarged in 1995 and subsequent additions have also increased the park. Around 23,000 hectares (56,834ac) of Forest Reserves has also been set aside as part of the South East Queensland Forestry Agreement."

These areas were "national parks in waiting" – but some were to wait a long time.



Greg Woods and Fiona



Sunshine Coasters from the **Green train** gather in Anzac Square Brisbane to march to the rally at King George Square in Brisbane

The agreement stated that all other State Forests were to become conservation reserves over a 25-year timeframe **to allow for one more harvest**, which brought the total reserve area to more than one million hectares (2,471,053ac).

Of course, it was ultimately too good to be true and successive government have reneged on various aspects of the agreement. On the Sunshine Coast, battles have had to be fought all over again to preserve the shattered remnants of these areas of public land. Indeed in 2024 the State government will become the developer of areas of State Forest still under leasehold to timber interests if the massive Beerwah East urban development goes ahead.

# In 1999, after 20 years of advocacy for the environment, the SCEC Annual Report summed it up:

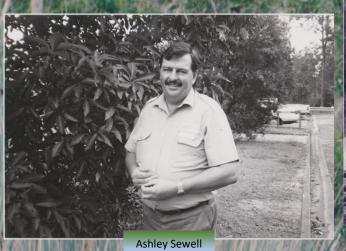
"Since its relatively modest beginnings, SCEC has grown to be a State-recognised umbrella organisation for over 50 Member Groups and in excess of 500 individuals and family members... The strength of SCEC and the Member Groups lies in the dedication of a large number of volunteers who are willing to give of their time, talents, skills, finances, expertise and blood, sweat and tears... There can be little doubt that the many achievements over the last 20 years have made the effort worthwhile."

An enormous part of the 1990s was spent by SCEC and its Member Groups in a series of (often simultaneous) campaigns to save areas of coastal wallum and which, eventually, had outstanding results for conservation. These are outlined in detail in the following chapter.

A Volunteers gallery has been compiled on the next few pages. These photos are mainly taken by Jillian Rossiter for *Eco Echo* and therefore are mostly from the 1990s. They represent only a small sample of all those who volunteered and whose names may not all be recorded. Thanks everyone!



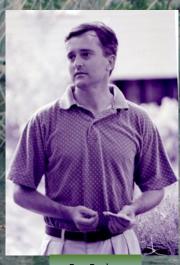
Ganga Hawkins





Karen Robinson





Ray Barber



Gary Lawler



Jane Minor



Janet Whish-Wilson



Lorna Fischer



Stuart Ransom



55

Peter Shooter

Noel Gardner





Beryl Muspratt aka Santa and Des Richie



Sue Coleman







Alison Joy-Smith

Ann Moran



Beverley Hand and Sammy Ringer



Christine Leibergreen





Gillian Pechey as a tree

Jenny de Hayre



Heather Melrose



Jenifer Simpson



Joe Ruiz Avila



Barbara Schwabe





Heather Hartford



Hermann Schwabe



Jackie WIlliams



Gaby Luft



Ian Burrell



<image>

extraordinaire

124

8

e c

Colleen Giles



Jill Jordan

TT'S ALLA BUNNS TREE-HUGGIT HIPPE

(L to R) Mark Ricketts and Alan Kerlin

CRAP!



Darryl Fry



Cliff Whiteoak





LB Joum

Laurie Capill



Lindsay Holt

Michael Powell





Jill Chamberlain



Professor Ian Lowe



Kerryn Jones



# Chapter 11 Fighting for Coastal Wallum

The major campaigns of the 1990s centred on what was left of the coastal wallum environment and the undeveloped Development Leases along the coast. The wallum environment includes open forests and woodlands, tea tree swamps, shrublands, lowland heath, sedgelands and sand dunes.



(Photograph by John Burrows)

It is an area of incredible biodiversity with around 1,000 species of flora recorded, including endemic species only found in these particular habitats and 8 species of Rare or Endangered flora. It provides habitat for a number of Threatened fauna species including the Ground parrot, Red goshawk, Eastern curlew and the Little tern. The coastal wallum provides important waterbird habitat, supporting 21 species listed on either the Japan-Australia and/or the China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreements.

The maps drawn up by conservationists in the 1980s showed how these areas of Crown land could be linked up with existing reserves to provide vital connectivity from Noosa to Maroochy.

New threats in the 1990s galvanised the efforts of SCEC, Noosa Parks Association and other Member Groups to try to realise this plan to link the areas. At the beginning of the 1990s environmental reserves like Mt Coolum, Emu Mountain, the Peregian Environment Park and Noosa National Park were like islands – isolated and unconnected – lacking the ability to protect flora and fauna into the future, especially in the face of a new wave of developments being proposed.

There were in fact a series of campaigns, some of which were fought simultaneously, so the timelines also overlap. Each campaign had a flow-on effect on another, but huge gains along the way were an incentive to double the efforts.

### Emu Swamp

In May 1990, T. M. Burke made a move to develop *Peregian Waters* on 170ha (420ac) of low lying land known as Emu Swamp. It was to be a \$212 million lake-style plan with housing, shopping centres, a holiday resort village, commercial development and a high tech park. The most amazing part of the design was a partnership with Exhibit Resources to include a 43ha Space World Park which included a lifesized shuttle, a space camp, museum and a fun park that proposed to attract one million visitors a year. It was dubbed the *Big Rocket* by SCEC's Mark Ricketts and opposition to the development mounted.

The name Emu Swamp pays no homage to the importance of this low lying wallum environment which was adjacent to Emu Mountain. It hosted a heathland, a tea tree swamp, low lying sedgeland, some Eucalypt forest, including magnificent stands of Scribbly gums *(Eucalyptus signata)*, and was important habitat for the endangered Ground parrot.

It was critical in terms of ecology because any interference with the vital wetland drainage on this site would also impact badly on remaining natural areas.



A bounty of wildflowers typical of the Emu Swamp area (Photograph by John Burrows)

The land straddled the Noosa-Maroochy border and Noosa Council was quick to oppose the development by lodging a formal objection. Almost 1400 objections were submitted and in an unprecedented move the **State government lodged an objection through the QNPWS on environmental grounds.** 

Although the development would result in total destruction of the site, the EIS recommended that more detailed studies be carried out to determine the conservation significance of the site.

A consultant's report indicated that "only" 40 Ground parrots would be lost. The development also took advantage of the extension of the Sunshine Motorway north of Coolum that was proposed by State government.

SCEC held a public meeting at Peregian that denounced the *Big Rocket* proposal and mounted a petition asking the State government to resume the land. It gained 2,000 signatures.

The issue was kept alive in the media and pressure mounted for the State government to resume the land and ultimately the development application was withdrawn in September 1991.

### **Sunshine Motorway**

In 1991 the State government had announced public consultation for **Stage 2 of the Sunshine Motorway**. A controversy erupted about the route of the Motorway from Coolum that was vicious, protracted but eventually decisive and in favour of conservation interests. The original plan showed an Eastern route right into Noosa Junction and continuing up the coast with further stages to the north. Clearly it was a road to enable development.

An editorial in *Eco Echo* (December 1990) summed up the situation:

"Ripping and tearing not only into our environment, but into our social fabric, the Motorway has galvanised people from all walks of life. It has certainly been a lesson above all else for the Government that the people of the Sunshine Coast are a force to be reckoned with. Whilst the environmental vandalism of Stage 1 is there for all to see and the toll issue remains in dispute, we must look forward towards resolving these issues before they are forced upon us with Stage 2.

The question now being asked is- *Do we need* a motorway at all?

... SCEC has spent a year in consultation with the Transport Department and National Parks & Wildlife negotiating the new Lake Weyba National Park. Even the Transport Department agrees that Emu Swamp is too fragile to run a road through... Who needs a Motorway to rip it apart?"

State government announced that Crown land around Lake Weyba was to become National Park in March 1991 but its gazettal remained in limbo until the route of the Motorway was determined. Indeed, the Eastern route was to go right through the proposed Lake Weyba National Park, cutting off forever the linkage to the north-east. Chairman of Noosa Shire Noel Playford gained support for what was called the Western route – west of Lake Weyba. SCEC did a postcard campaign and lots of meetings and media.

A powerful coalition was built which included SCEC, Noosa Council, Save Today Our Parklands (STOP), Noosa Parks Association, the State Education Department, Gordon Simpson MLA Cooroora, Ray Barber Labor candidate Cooroora, Alan Lowe Liberal candidate Cooroora and the National Parks and Wildlife Service – all in favour of the Western route.

In the opposite corner there was also the East Side Motorway Support Group – definitely not a SCEC member!

As part of the campaign a huge rally was held at Noosa Bicentennial Hall with speakers from SCEC (Mark Ricketts), Noosa Council (Noel Playford), STOP Committee (Gary Morris) and the big drawcard being Peter Garrett, representing the Australian Conservation Foundation, all pointing out the idiocy of continuing the Motorway up the coast.

Committed conservationist Cr Heather Melrose wrote:

"In January 1992, survey ribbons for the northern end of the Motorway signalled that the major termination roundabout was positioned dead centre on a pristine hill of ancient Scribbly gums forming the southwestern frame to Emu Swamp. This Scribbly gum forest would be very little different from when Captain Cook sailed past."

SCEC went into bat to save this large stand of Scribbly gums (*Eucalyptus signata*) destined to be lost to the Motorway and the Peregian roundabout was moved to preserve this wonderfully diverse forest.



Scribbly gum forest (Photograph John Burrows)



The Sunshine Motorway under construction behind Mt Coolum destroyed a Melaleuca forest and more (Picture from *Coolum Advertiser*-A look back in time by Frances Windolf)

SCEC worked with Noosa Council, Noosa Parks Association and Save Today Our Parklands to change the route of the Sunshine Motorway to the west, averting another coastal highway for development. This enabled finalisation of Lake Weyba National Park, Emu Swamp National Park and other extensions to the greenbelt form Noosa to Coolum. By November 1992, the State government announced that 257ha (635ac) of the leasehold land was to be purchased from T. M. Burke for a national park. This put an end to the development of Emu Swamp and represented a major conservation victory.

It took until December 1993 for Premier Wayne Goss and Environment Minister Molly Robson to officially declare the 275ha area (635ac) as Emu Swamp National Park.

Weyba Creek Environmental Park was formally gazetted on 3 December 1993 under the Land Act 1962. At that time, there was a trustee agreement between Noosa Shire Council and the Director-General of the Department of Primary Industries.



Lake Weyba with Emu Mountain and Mt Coolum in the background (Photograph by John Burrows)

In 1994, the Environmental Park was gazetted as Weyba Creek Conservation Park under the Nature Conservation Act 1992. Noosa Council donated a connecting piece of land and it became part of what was named the southern section of Noosa National Park. The Sunshine Coast had gained 840ha (2,075ac) of dune and swamp land east of Lake Weyba and from Burgess Creek to the Shire boundary. A 300ha (741ac) former Timber Reserve on the western shore also became part of the protected area, mainly thanks to decades of lobbying by NPA's Dr Arthur Harrold.

The greenbelt proposal was slowly becoming a reality, but there was one major sticking point right smack in the middle that posed a problem which was to take the rest of the decade to put to bed.

#### Marcus High Dunes



Lake Weyba from Marcus High Dune area (Photograph by John Burrows)

The Marcus High Dunes became the focus of a magnificent campaign by NPA, STOP and SCEC. It was literally the last remaining significant area containing mainland high dune heath vegetation in the entire SEQ region. Unfortunately, it was part of the T. M. Burke Development Lease and a proposal for residential and tourist development suddenly surfaced.

Later research by Heather Melrose found out that the original T. M. Burke lease was reregistered in 1990 without any public notification. Not only that but the lease included an additional area of the high dune heathland. NPA, STOP and SCEC asked the State government for an enquiry into the leases.

Although the application was made in 1991, it took until 2001 for a final conservation outcome. It is a long and convoluted story and even with incredible support and leadership from Noosa Council it still took a decade to resolve.

Queensland Conservation Council Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland and the Threatened Species Network joined the campaign. Noosa Council came up with an audacious concept and proceeded to pass a resolution to adopt a Development Control Plan (DCP) with **zero development** - probably a first in Australia.

Noosa Parks Association and Save Today Our Parklands (STOP) organised a mass rally on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> August 1994 called *High Noon for the High Dune*, the name coined by then Noosa Councillor Vivien Griffin. Organisers were threatened with prosecution if they entered the land. A walk from Mahogany Drive, Marcus Beach, along the David Low Way saw 2,500 people circle the perimeter of the site because the developer had threatened arrest for trespassing.

Lobbying continued and finally the State government approved the DCP with zero development. It was a coup that rendered the land worthless to the developer, but significant compensation was eventually paid. It was a great win for conservation and a vitally important part of the greenbelt jigsaw. In 2001 the State government announced its approval for 15 additional parcels of land to make the greenbelt a reality from Noosa to Coolum.



Des Ritchie (right) and Joe Ruiz Avila



Heather Melrose

#### **Noosa North Shore**

Before we leave the northern end of the Sunshine Coast, to see what was happening at the time in the south in Maroochy Shire, there was another long running campaign in the far north of the Sunshine Coast region to resolve.

A proposal by developer Leisuremark for a massive tourist development on Noosa's North Shore in 1987 had become the subject of a Court appeal when Noosa Shire Council rejected the application and the developer appealed.

The proposal included a 600 room international hotel, apartments, shops, restaurants, a 27-hole golf course, a large artificial lake with boating facilities and a bridge across the Noosa River.

Worst of all, the guests were to fly in via an airstrip adjacent to the Cooloola National Park that NPA had been trying to get closed.

The Queensland Conservation Council and the Australian Conservation Foundation became co-respondents in the case, assisted locally by Noosa Parks Association and SCEC.

After a lengthy and expensive Court case, the issue was finalised in 1999 when the land was purchased by Noosa Shire Council and protected with appropriate town planning.

It was a landmark win for conservation when the application was rejected and only the second time in legal history at that time when environmental grounds were considered valid evidence.

How very different it could have been if there was a pro-development Council majority in Noosa Shire.

Noosa Council provided strong and effective leadership, particularly when Noel Playford was Mayor (1988 – 1994) followed by Bob Abbot (1997 – 2004). These were pivotal times when enormous gains for conservation were made.



Flowering Grasstrees (Photograph by John Burrows)

### **Natural Heritage Listing**

The entire undeveloped coastal area from Noosa to Coolum was of high ecological importance - an unacknowledged and unprotected part of our natural heritage in the 1990s. It seems hard to believe that the State government took until 1995 to "proclaim" Endangered Species Schedules in the Nature Conservation Act.

In February 1996, SCEC received advice that an unknown person had made a submission to the Australian Heritage Commission to have a huge area of 15,000ha (37,065ac) of coastal lowlands listed on the Interim Register of the National Estate. It was mainly Crown Land wallum but with some private or leasehold land, stretching from Pacific Paradise, around the Sunshine Coast Airport and north to Lake Weyba. It included Mt Coolum, Emu Mountain and Marcus Shores. SCEC swung into action to garner community support for this listing.

SCEC prepared a submission in favour of the nomination. It was detailed work taken on by SCEC Coordinator Barbara Schwabe, Vivien Griffin and later Lindsay Holt with support from botanists Ann Moran, Garry Thomas, Adrian Walker, as well as Sue Davies, David Nalder, Paul Bardon, Stan Tutt, and Cliff Whiteoak. The area contained highly diverse plant communities that included 7 Rare or Vulnerable species, one endemic species and a Number of Rare or Endangered Fauna species.

Of course there were objections from developers, landholders and no support was forthcoming from Liberal-National politicians. Maroochy Shire Council under Bob King also opposed the listing but this was reversed with the Culley-led Council (1997 – 2000). Noosa Council supported the nomination and even suggested further areas for inclusion. A wide range of community support was forthcoming and a working group was formed. Coolum Progress Association formed a sub-committee to support the listing and STOP held a series of walks in the proposed area.

In October 1996 the whole area was placed on the Interim Register of the National Estate, to be followed by a period of public consultation. It took a further 3 years for the Heritage Commission's determination that 8,000ha (19,768ac) of the Noosa-Maroochy Wallum Area be entered on the Register of the National Estate. The Commission was careful to state that the listing did not place any constraints on private property owners and did not allow public access to private property.

It was however of enormous assistance in forwarding the agenda to have a connected greenbelt from Noosa to Colum and in fighting for remaining areas of Crown land around the airport. Permanent protection of these areas was something that SCEC and NPA and others had been campaigning for since the 1980s.

Recognition of the coastal wallum put it on par with Kakadu and the Great Barrier Reef, but SCEC would not stop until as much as possible was National Park. The listing legally constrained the Federal government but it does not stop land speculation. While the prodevelopment Maroochy Council under Bob King was in office, moves were taken for massive development around Peregian. Plans were afoot for a huge residential development, an 18-hole golf course and a lake system - all within the wallum corridor. Maroochy Council granted approval in August 1996 and rezoning conditions included environmental impact assessments.

The site contained some of the last remaining lowland koala habitat and Endangered ecosystems. Subsequent legal advice was that an EIS was not required for the first 168 lots and so the damage was done. This became a lengthy battle that unfolded into the new century.



Sunshine Motorway through the wallum corridor near Coolum (Photograph John Burrows)



Coastal wallum (Photograph John Burrows)

As a footnote, an amendment of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act of 1999 established a National Heritage List and a Commonwealth Heritage List replaced the former Register of the National Estate in 2003. The Register of the National Estate was closed in 2007 and is no longer a statutory list. All references to the Register of the National Estate were removed from the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) on 19 February 2012. Sadly, the Wallum Area did not make it onto the new listing but remains as an "electronic assemblage" if you can negotiate the website.

Its importance was educational to the community, to Councils and did assist the process of re-allocating some Crown land for conservation at this critical time.

### **Development Lease 3**

Following the historic de-gazettal of the National Park south of Mt Coolum in 1959 the Maroochy airport went ahead on part of this land. It contained large stands of paperbarks *(Melaleuca quinquenervia)* and the magnificent wildflowers that had led to the formation of the Sunshine Coast Wildflower Society in 1979.

In 1976 the Mt Coolum Golf Club had been established and around 1988-89 the Club applied for and was granted part of Portion 877 to expand the golf course. Development Lease 3 (DL3), encompassing Portions 877 and 878, was held by Suncoast Developments and Eddie de Vere (Maroochy Chairman 1967 - 1982) who became a spokesperson for Suncoast after he was defeated. No development had taken place on the land, mainly due to the huge amounts of fill required and proximity to the airport.

There was no public advertising, but the Quinn Group took over DL3 and the lease was renewed in 1989.

In 1990, the construction of a 65 metre wide drain was undertaken to provide fill for the Sadly, Quinn development on the eastern side of David Low Way, which now houses Mount Coolum Shores.

This markedly altered drainage patterns of the delicate heathland and it is believed that the stand of the Endangered Swamp Stringybarks *(Eucalyptus conglomerata)* on Portion 877 was destroyed during or as a result of construction of this drain.

Largely due to lobbying by SCEC's Karen Robinson, a small reserve containing the *Eucalyptus conglomerata* was established on the Mt Coolum Shores development.

This preserves the only known stand of the Swamp Stringybarks in this area. The land clearing associated with the Quinn development started a new wave of support to protect the remainder of this land as national park. Coincidentally the Development Lease had lapsed due to non-compliance and reverted to vacant Crown Land.



In 1990, officers from National Parks and Wildlife and Council inspected the site and indeed found that the excavation of the massive drain had affected the quality of the existing vegetation on the site. The northern end was the most degraded whilst the southern and south-western sections of the site were in the best condition.

The conservation significance of P877 was confirmed by the Turnbull and Olsen Vegetation Survey for Maroochy Shire in 1992. A report to Maroochy Council stated:

"The subject land is all that remains of the original wallum country between Maroochy River and Mt Coolum. It provides a link between the Mt Coolum NP and the Mudjimba Reserve 301."

During the February 1992 floods, the importance of this large area of undeveloped land as pondage was seen when the river extended itself across the David Low Way into Marcoola. Finally, it seemed to be acknowledged that this land was not suitable for filling and development.

Then in 1995, Maroochy Shire applied for further land to extend the airport and industrial development. The State sanctioned the excision of 48.6ha (120ac) from P877 and despite its National Estate listing a Deed of Grant to Council went ahead.

The Department of Environment and Heritage agreed to carry out a Planning Study for remaining unallocated Crown land, which dragged on until 2001. The remnants of the old DL3 were identified as a Critical and Broad Nature Conservation Area as part of the SEQ 2001 Regional Planning exercise, i.e. very high priority for maintenance and protection for regional biodiversity.

Finally, what was left of Portions 877 and 878 became part of the Mt Coolum National Park (Marcoola section).

Endangered Swamp Stringybark (Eucalyptus conglomerate)

The State launched the Sunshine Coast Airport Wallum Management Plan in 2003 but there were still battles to come over extensions to the runway and for industrial development.

The State Planning Study allocated 600ha (1,482ac) of Crown land for National Park, incorporating the Marcus High Dunes, Emu Mountain, sections of the former Peregian Environment Park, a West Weyba section of Noosa National Park extension and an enlarged Maroochy River Conservation Park. The battle was won as much as was practicable and at least most of the remaining Crown land along the coast was dedicated for conservation. Not so for R301 however...

### Twin Waters and R301

Since 1955, the ecological importance of R301 had been recognised and National Parks & Wildlife had recommended conservation tenure for the whole area of Crown land. It was a wonderful complex ecosystem containing wetlands, shifting sand dunes, littoral rainforest and a small hardwood forest. It contained great diversity with 6 major plant communities and supported a spectrum of wildlife, as well as being an important bird habitat area and roosting area for migratory and wading birds.



Floral diversity of R301

The 1990s saw the long running saga of R301 come to a conclusion but it was not the one that conservationists wanted.

In 1988, the State government had approved a development proposal for a resort on 20ha (49ac) of R301 with a Ministerial rezoning, which meant no rights to appeal. Although it was a token effort, SCEC met with the developers to try to claw back whatever could be done to improve the outcome and also sought to have the EIS made public.

SCEC gained an undertaking that the size of the proposed lagoon was reduced to occupy less of the Permit to Occupy area, the most ecologically fragile area that extended to the high tide mark. SCEC were also assured that no artificial landscaping could occur on the Permit area. On the lease area where the resort was to be sited, proposed condominiums were moved back from the former close proximity to the Beach Protection zone. The resort opened in time for Christmas 1990.

The concept of Twin Waters was the resort and the canal estate on adjoining privately owned land. SCEC, WPSQ Maroochy and the Australian Littoral Society continued to negotiate and as a result the canal estate was required to have a weir instead of a direct tidal connection to the river. Lend Lease bought the 157ha (388ac) site and by September 1996 the initial stages of Twin Waters had become a reality with the development taking a further 10 years. More Crown land was later given away for a golf course.

SCEC was the lead agency in the 1992 declaration of the Maroochy River Conservation Park, which includes mangrove and saltmarsh areas as well as Goat and Channel Islands.

Preserving the entirety of R301 could have been magnificent but it was is definitely an achievement to conserve the remnants. In 2024 there is the additional new threat of Twin Waters West. A total of 367ha (907ac) of protected areas had been created south of Coolum to protect the wallum corridor and link isolated blocks.

### **Mooloolah National Park**

The introduction of a Green Levy in Maroochy Shire could not gain traction however, until the election of the Culley Council in 1997. After 5 years of lobbying, media pressure from SCEC and other groups, a Vegetation Conservation Levy was introduced.

This enabled a major joint purchase by Council and State government that added important areas of wallum and heathlands to Mooloolah National Park. The cost reflected its urban potential. Council committed \$1million plus \$575,000 over 3 years and the State contributed \$1.5million. The Green Levy raised around \$1million a year at the time.

The result was that 227ha (560ac) of wallum adjacent to the existing National Park was saved. It was a large and intact example of coastal lowland and with a total of 298 plant species surveyed, it was richer in rare plants (including 30 *Eucalyptus congolmerata*) than Mooloolah River National Park itself.

The battle for the wallum was far from over however and was to shift back to the Coolum area in the early years of the 2000s.

### Habitat 2000

The campaigns for the wallum had heightened awareness of the importance of connectivity as a fundamental concept to keep fauna. Also, in the late 1990's, tree clearing rates within the greater Sunshine Coast and Caboolture regions were alarming - with some clearing rates at 5 times the state average at the time.

In the face of rampant and unrelenting loss of biodiversity, SCEC set about to scientifically and strategically identify elements of the regional landscape, especially riparian and coastal areas that could be protected, connected and enhanced. The aim of the project was to work in partnership with the community, State and Local government to identify and secure long term protection of all key wildlife corridors in the Sunshine Coast region. This involved the conservation or re-establishment of significant vegetation communities to physically connect them and thus foster ecological sustainability.

Commencing in 1998, this work became the Habitat 2000 Wildlife Corridor Project. It was a scientifically rigorous approach that was undertaken by Krister Waern with SCEC Project Officer Lindsay Holt.



Krister Waern (left) with SCEC Project Officer Lindsay Holt

The project proceeded in four phases:

1. Assessing the remnant vegetation into the 'Risk of Loss' categories according to the protection arising under the then applicable Planning Scheme and the Regional Forest Agreement

2. Identifying and defining the key wildlife corridors for the local government area and the major discontinuities in the identified corridors (i.e. 'Areas of Concern')

3. Prioritising the key 'Areas of Concern' for onground rehabilitation and revegetation works and voluntary conservation agreements with landholders

4. Identifying possible wildlife corridor underpasses for the major roads

The mapping supported the designation of conservation areas and the protection of ecologically important areas.

It was a positive end to the decade of the 1990s and gave hope for the future.

SCEC in 2024 is planning to use the methodology as the basis for a similar contemporary initiative 20 years on - **Habitat 2020**.

### Chapter 12 Abel Honey's Legacy



Abel Honey (AKA Brian Mann) was a Life Member of SCEC when he died in his homeland of Canada after a relatively short illness on 19 September 1995. He was only 51 and is remembered by friends and associates as a "character" - an original thinker and a person with a happy disposition. A memorial service for Abel was held on his property that fronted the Wappa Dam at Lot 6 Nicholls Road in Yandina.

Abel loved the land. Amongst the nature that thrilled him the most were the tiny ground orchids and the little frogs. Anyone who visited Abel was given a personalised guided tour of his property. He pointed out many of the trees along the way and his special spots. The deck overlooking beautiful Wappa Dam, the rainforest walk, all the coloured waterlilies, tree ferns, rock pools, etc... You could feel his attachment to the land in his running commentary- From Cynthia Hoogstraten, friend. He was a collector of vintage cars, a lot of which he imported from America, and these were left to a friend in his will. SCEC had been contacted by his solicitor with the surprising news that Abel had left the remainder of his estate to SCEC.

This estate consisted of 24.58 ha (60ac) of land at Doonan Bridge Road, Verrierdale/Peregian South and 7.918 ha (20ac) at Nichols Road, Yandina. (This property included the house that Abel owner built – his residence.)

# He also left a debt in the form of a mortgage on his land.

Elaine Green explained in April 1996:

"Upon the death of Abel Honey last year, SCEC was left a substantial bequest. It is important to clarify that Abel did not leave us his land to be held in trust to preserve it. The Will stated that the residue of his estate after payment of liabilities was to go to SCEC. In fact, the Executor has total legal control of the estate until satisfaction of these liabilities and was empowered to sell the land if necessary. **There are debts in the order of \$20,000 to be met** before the titles of 2 blocks at Wappa Dam and at Verrierdale can be transferred to SCEC.

A Committee comprising Jane Hamwood, Jillian Rossiter, Des Ritchie, Joe Ruiz Avila and Elaine Green was formed to liaise with the Executor. So far it has generally been agreed that the land at Wappa Dam has environmental significance and should be retained in its present form. Some great tenants have been found and are in the process of settling into the house. As anyone who knew Abel would be aware, there has been an enormous amount of collectables and junk to be sorted out to date and much effort has been spent on simply cleaning up.



The plan is to use the rent to pay for rates and maintenance on the Nicholls Road property and over time to allow for some improvements. These would mainly be to set up the 'barn' as a meeting place for SCEC... and to provide basic facilities. The SCEC use of the Nicholls Road property would be kept low key and educational with a proper management plan yet to be formulated...

With regard to the Coolum property, the committee has decided to fully investigate a number of options. The problem of meeting the debt has to be faced...

Those of you who might be shaking your heads and thinking, as I initially did, that Abel would have wanted us to keep the land from being developed might be shocked to know that we have copies of plans for developments on both blocks which Abel was in the process of instigating – a 'resort' complex for Nicholls Road and a 40-lot Group Title for Verrierdale. (Only 6 blocks were actually allowed under Council rules.)

Abel was a friend of the environment and we are eternally grateful for his bequest, but his intention was obviously to help SCEC rather than to preserve these blocks in their existing forms. It is a great chance to put SCEC on its feet financially and I believe this was the true intention of Abel's bequest." So, money was borrowed to pay the outstanding liabilities and then on 17<sup>th</sup> September 1996, there was a **claim on the estate** made by Kevin Monk's company Colorcore Corporation. They claimed **\$844,849** for plans and discussion involving proposed developments on the Coolum land. This claim was to drag on and on...

On the Nichols Road property, Abel had ownerbuilt a small house (which he called Abel's Stable) with an enormous shed. Fortunately, the Executor had agreed to allow SCEC occupancy while the Estate was being resolved. The house was rented out to Claude Girrall and Steve Nomad to pay ongoing costs.

They set up a nursery to grow rare and endangered plants with Noosa naturalist Adrian Walker and a *Friends of Abel's* group was formed. Down near the Wappa Dam there was a "shed" which Steve named *The Lakehouse* and after some safety improvements, this became the "home away from home" for SCEC.



Claude Girral at the nursery at Abel's

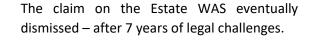
In 1995 SCEC held the first of many of its AGMs at Abel's Lakehouse with its spacious forested surrounds.



(L to R) Mark Ricketts, Vivienne Coleman and Ian Mackay caught unawares during an AGM at Abel's Lakehouse



Vivien Griffin plants a tree in the forest at Abel's in memory of SCEC volunteer Ian Burrell



Jillian Rossiter takes up the story:

"Since 1996 Abel's Executor, on behalf of the Estate, has been fighting the claim with a view to having the action struck off. But the judges 'always seemed to be bending over backwards' to assist the plaintiff/claimant who after a consistent changeover of lawyers proceeded by representing himself. When the Court allowed Kevin Monk and his company a third extension of time to produce evidence in 1999 Mark Bray appointed Andrew Wood from Hunt and Hunt in Brisbane to pursue the case.

In 2002 Kevin Monk was declared bankrupt so finally, we thought, the claim would now come to a close but... a *new* director for Colorcore became the solitary plaintiff.



Pioneer conservationists Kathleen McArthur died in August 2000. Kathleen's niece Wendy Gordon and Jillian Rossiter (pictured) plant a rare tree Aglae brassii on the Abel Honey land to commemorate Kathleen's contributions

After many more frustrations, in November 2003 Jane Minor and Jillian Rossiter attended the Supreme Court with the Executor to nervously watch Barrister Ian Erskine and instructing Solicitor Andrew Wood move to have this case finally, we hoped, struck off. The plaintiff, Kevin Monk, arrived from Sydney representing Colorcore and was permitted a surprisingly lengthy amount of time to explain why the appointed Director of Colorcore was still in Bali and not available for the hearing.

But this time the Judge struck the Action off for ever and tears and champagne were mixed that day by the Abel Honey Committee of three who had seen it through. (Jane Minor, Elaine Green and Jillian Rossiter).

To pay the debt Abel left and significant Legal Fees, part of the Estate had to be sold by the Estate's Executor. The Abel Honey Committee had much earlier recommended the lower block (Lot 7) at Verrierdale for sale as it was half cleared with some regrowth. One house only was permitted on this site.

Rather than have the whole 24 hectares sold in one lot as was the Executor's right, we had it subdivided into two 12 hectare lots, allowed by the Town Plan of that time.

The remaining Lot 8 had an enduring vegetation protection covenant placed on it which allows one house only, a minimum of clearing for the residence, indigenous species only to be planted, etc.

The Auction of Lot 7 was held Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> April 2004 on site. We had previously employed registered valuer, Tony Foley to value the land to provide informed judgement when settling on a reserve price for the Auction. After visiting the land he recommended that we clear old tracks, some pathways to the eight dams and some regrowth, also to place strategically signs and maps of the land. He marked the boundary with extra tape. We had three working bees and Tony was of great assistance and guidance to us workers – LB Joum, Jane, Elaine, Mark Ricketts, Lindsay Holt, Des Ritchie and me.

On the final inspection day (Easter Saturday) Des and Tony even drove people around the property to show its special qualities.

Interest and some resentment from Verrierdale neighbours, past acquaintances of Abel and misinformation about the reasons for the sale led to an article by Frank Wilkie in Tuesday's, April 13, *Sunshine Coast Daily* – 'Honey's sweet gift sparks bitter battle'. The Auction was also reported the day after in the *Sunshine Coast Sunday* 'Land Gift snares exceptional bid at Coast Auction'.

And exceptional it was – even the break in steady rain for a couple of hours! The 12 hectares was sold, after a heart-stopping auction, for \$525.000. The new owner is a young builder who bought this land to 'get away from Kawana Island' and also where 'his baby daughter can grow up'. He plans to build a 'solar home' and grow a Farm Forest.

The settlement of Lot 7, final payment of legal fees and other debts was completed by Friday 11<sup>th</sup> June. There are still costs for setting up a Trust (amount unknown) to be deducted, also the change of title for Lot 8 Doonan Bridge Road and 8 hectares at Nichols Road Yandina, to SCEC's name, before the estate is finalised.

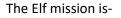
Now we (SCEC) have assets we need to 'handle them with care' so a *Future Directions* committee has been formed. This Committee will source information, consider options and make recommendations and reports about the future of this bequest (and other bequests) for maximum benefit for the environment and SCEC. The Committee comprises: Charmaine Foley (SCEC President), Christine Leibergreen and Val Lewis (SCEC Vice-Presidents), Jillian Rossiter, Jane Minor, Kerry Donaghue (Financial Consultant) and Tony Foley (Planning and Property Consultant).

We plan to celebrate the finalisation of Abel's Bequest, after nearly nine years, with perhaps a picnic at Abel's in Yandina. Thank you Abel!" These two parcels of land were subsequently sold by June 2007 and together formed the funds/capital of the **Environmental Legacy Foundation (ELF)**, created in 2009 as a not-forprofit limited liability company to manage gifts and bequests from those concerned about the future of the Sunshine Coast environment.

ELF has charitable gift fund status and welcomes financial contributions which are tax deductible to donors, including bequests-

"No matter how large or small your gift you can make an enormous difference – and leave a legacy to be proud of."

ELF funds the annual University of the Sunshine Coast Annual Postgraduate Sustainability Bursary, provides funds for SCEC programs as well as (in 2024) Coolum and North Shore Coastcare and Barung Landcare.



"To provide support for programmes and activities that educate and advocate for our unique ecosystems, our wildlife and our forests and to conserve our precious natural resources. We do this by investing donations we receive into ethical investment funds in order to enable us to provide long term, ongoing donations to Sunshine Coast organisations and institutions committed to our mission."

So that is how Abel Honey's legacy created ELF – it sounds like a fable – but one man has made an enormous and ongoing contribution to the natural environment that he loved and to SCEC.



Echidnas (Photograph by John Burrows)



### **Chapter 13 Hangovers**

Organisationally, SCEC moved into the digital age with a website and emails first set up in 2001. This was also the International Year of the Volunteer and 2 long term SCEC members, Jane Minor and Jillian Rossiter, were honoured at a presentation arranged by MP Peter Wellington. A BBQ was held at Nambour Showgrounds where the politicians cooked for the volunteers.



Volunteers Breakfast at Nambour Showgrounds 2001. Below- MP Dean Wells serves volunteers their breakfast



A number of environmental issues were left hanging in the balance as the new century commenced and SCEC was at the forefront of pushing for their resolution. Things had come a long way in 30 years since SCEC was formed but sometimes, they also appeared to go backwards. However, the first decade of the 2000s was a definitive time for the resolution of a number of key conservation issues.

### Last Line of Defence

In late 1999 Pincushion had again become an island in the Maroochy River as high seas opened the south channel to the ocean and caused massive beach erosion. Camping sites within the declared Erosion Prone Zone were lost and strong currents were created in the estuary. Over 400 sand-filled geotextile bags were placed to keep back the ocean.

The Culley Council (1997-2000) set up a working group which endorsed the idea of a "last line of defence" to protect Council infrastructure at Cotton Tree if required. SCEC advocate Jim Cash, with his detailed knowledge of the river, was on the working group.

With a change of Council in 2000, Council endorsed a plan for a \$2.5 million dredging program that would have destroyed the Fish Habitat Reserve. Fortunately, it was not approved by the State government.

The State started detailed modelling of the river mouth to guide decisions making and in September 2001 agreement was reached to establish a "zone of oscillation" around Pincushion Island, leaving it free to do what it had done for centuries – but within limits. The compromise was that "if necessary" a boulder wall would be built to protect Council "assets" on the fragile sand spit. The geotextile groynes would trap the littoral sand drift and limited dredging (outside of the Fish Habitat Reserve) would restore the beach to the south of the groynes.

Construction was staged, with the first groyne completed in November and when the remaining works were completed by May 2003, it was seemingly successful at retaining a wide sandy beach.

The Maroochy River was again saved from hard engineering and importantly the general public was now onside with soft engineering solutions to the "problem" of nature doing her thing, whilst the real problem was allowing development of a major caravan park on a fragile sand spit.



Excavator at work in Pincushion Caravan Park during peak of king tide January 2002 (Photograph: Picture Sunshine Coast - Sunshine Coast Council)



Excavator installing sand bags in front of Pincushion Caravan Park during peak of king tide January 2002 (Photograph: Picture Sunshine Coast - Sunshine Coast Council)

### **Tewantin to Tin Can Bay Road**

A road from Tewantin to Tin Can Bay, in one shape or form, had been on the State government agenda since the 1980s and persisted throughout the 1990s. The route from Tewantin to Boreen Point and on to Tin Can Bay was costed at \$65 million.

Queensland Cabinet documents released in 2000 revealed that a development company had approached the State government with a plan to build 68 towns between Noosa River and Double Island Point, connected by 1,600km of roads.

The Tewantin to Tin Can Bay Road was a hangover from these times and emerged again in the early 2000s. It was painted as Stage 4 of the Sunshine Motorway – right through the Kin Kin scrub – an area of considerable ecological value.

Environmentalist Greg Wood wrote in *Eco Echo*:

"It is obvious to anyone who looks impartially at recent history that the proposed road will be an artery to deliver industrial steroids to the existing landscape. Sugar and housing will be the base medications, depilating the struggling remnant vegetation, engorging the townships and hinterland to a caricature of genuine village life and initiating the cyclic uncertainty, unfulfilled expectation and lack of equitable participation that is so apparent in the 'builder's trades' economies to the south. The proposed road will also be the springboard to parts further north, forging the link that can accelerate the SEQ megalopolis."

SCEC and NPA campaigned widely to publicise the high value habitat that would be lost and by mid-2001 both State and Federal environment authorities had listed key habitat within the route corridor, Kin Kin riparian vegetation, as an endangered community. It took more than 2 years of concentrated lobbying until the plans for the road were finally laid aside – hopefully for good.

# Land Clearing

Thanks largely to the work of Joh Bjelke Petersen, who pioneered the use of bulldozers dragging huge chains through the bush, more land was cleared in Queensland from 1945 – 1995 than in the previous 150 years.

The year 1999-2000 saw land clearing reach a peak of 758,000ha (1,873,058ac) of trees cleared across Queensland, which was being called the *land clearing capital of Australia*. In terms of the proportions of trees cleared and trees remaining it was on par with Brazil.

Campaigning stepped up in the early 2000s and a huge street march and rally were held in Brisbane. The Vegetation Management Act 1999 (VMA) was implemented in September 2000 but it only regulated limited clearing and freeholding leases and largescale clearing was still being undertaken on privately owned properties.

The government process was informed by the refinement of Regional Ecosystem mapping and "consultation" and was very slow. SCEC Project Officer Lindsay Holt participated in the stakeholder meetings. SCEC highlighted the clearing associated with urban development on the Sunshine Coast at the expense of native flora and fauna, of which 70 identified species were threatened by loss of habitat. Often the clearing was undertaken while the land was zoned Rural so that it was legal.



It was an extremely contentious issue due to the perceived rights of landholders and panic clearing occurred, but by the end of 2006 legislation was passed to end broad scale land clearing of **remnant** vegetation for agriculture. Concessions were made to farmers and clearing on identified non-remnant vegetation continued. An estimated 20 million ha (49,421,076ac) of native woodlands were saved from the bulldozer and wildlife given a reprieve. The campaign continued however to stop the clearing of higher conservation value regenerating native vegetation (regrowth).

# **Crown Lands Wins**

After more than a decade of lobbying - in the lead up to the 2001 State election - the Beattie government promised to add more than 700ha (1,729ac) of key conservation land to the Noosa and Coolum National Parks and Maroochy River Conservation Park. This included important links in the National Estatelisted Noosa Maroochy Wallum Corridor, the two conservation areas north and south of Maroochy Airport-formerly allocated for industry at Coolum, Emu Mountain, the Marcus High Dunes and wallum and koala habitat to the south-west of Lake Weyba. SCEC had previously persuaded the Minister for Natural Resources and Environment to undertake an audit of Unallocated State land, Leaseholds and public reserves between the and Maroochy Noosa Rivers. The commitments made owed much to the conservation assessments that were undertaken as part of the audit and to SCEC Project Officer Lindsay Holt's detailed submissions.

Finally, P877 and P878 (the remnants of the former national park near Mt Coolum that was revoked for the airport) was protected as part of the Mt Coolum National Park (Marcoola section). A total of 367ha (9067ac) of national parks had now been created south of Coolum to protect the wallum corridor and link isolated areas.

But there was no rest for the weary as new development threats to the Heritage-listed Wallum Area emerged that were to take enormous resources to fight.

# Back to the Wallum Corridor

Since 1989 SCEC had been fighting to protect the unique conservation value of a site now known as Peregian Springs (previously Lakelands). The original Maroochy Council rezoning in 1989 approved residential development including lakes and an 18-hole golf course. This was all within the Noosa Coolum Wallum Area – one of the largest areas of intact vegetation on the Sunshine Coast lowlands and a vital link between conservation areas of Lake Weyba, Peregian and Coolum.

SCEC made written submissions, held public meetings and consulted with Maroochy Councils under 4 different Mayors. SCEC endured threats of defamation litigation from the developers and there were incidents where vegetation was cleared without receiving the necessary vegetation permits. In 1996 the first stage of subdivision for 168 lots was approved by Maroochy Council without requiring **any** environmental impact assessments. The State government then wrote to Council requesting that environmental impact studies be carried out for the whole estate before it would ratify any approvals. Council withdrew its previous support for the first stage of subdivision.

The developer appealed and a Consent Order issued by P & E (Planning and Environment) court required a Master Plan for the remainder of the site to include management strategies for preservation and protection of areas, communities and species of conservation value, relating these strategies to long-term viability of such areas. Earthworks began in 1999 with a merged company Forrester Kurts Properties (FPK). The Commonwealth EPBC Act protected only the most critical habitat of 3 Threatened species. Just 6.8ha (17ac) of wetlands was protected on one site and about 67ha (165ac) on the larger Peregian Springs site representing 21% of the two sites.

The habitat of koalas and at least 22 other mammal species would be almost totally cleared, including four glider species. This was an impressive mammal population mainly associated with hollow-bearing forests and woodlands. Mooloolah National Park has only 7 recorded. The overall quality of biodiversity of this site exceeded that of other coastal national parks.

Let down by State and Commonwealth processes, SCEC embarked on a direct action campaign. In April 2002 about 200 concerned citizens gathered at the entrance of the Peregian Springs development. It was a peaceful protest with Lindsay Holt and Drew Hutton addressing the crowd, with another rally to be held 6 weeks later, focussed on trying to get Commonwealth and State statutory protection of Noosa/Maroochy Wallum Corridor.



Protesting against Peregian Springs in 2002

Peregian Springs became one of the first largescale Master Planned communities on the Sunshine Coast. Negotiations with Council and representations by SCEC however resulted in significant improvements to the original proposal. There are 50 hectares of conservation areas to ensure habitat and breeding grounds for native fauna. A recovery plan for the endangered Emu Mountain She oak and a dedicated nature corridor form part of the conservation gains.

This is a summary of an issue that took up a lot of time and effort by SCEC and other groups and was somewhat of a testing ground for yet another proposal that was unfolding literally next door in the Wallum Area.

# **Coolum Ridges**

In October 2003, SCEC appealed the urban rezoning granted in the year 2000 for what was then being called the Coolum Ridges development west of Coolum in the wallum corridor. Noosa Council also independently appealed the approval. Noosa Council wanted compensation from Maroochy for the cost of additional roadworks, parking and social facilities on account of this development on its border.

As part of the legal appeal process, SCEC held a number of "without prejudice" meetings with the developer to try to achieve better outcomes for the koala habitat on the site and to extend the buffers around core habitat. Most issues were resolved as conditions and amendments to the Master Plan and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was subsequently negotiated with the developer promising that the development would aim to set a new benchmark in environmental responsibility.

In February 2004, the Planning and Environment Court rejected the development and ruled that an amended application be submitted. The development assessment process was criticised in the judgement and this was an application that had been passed unanimously by all Maroochy Councillors. The developer announced that it was committed to the project and had to restart the public consultation process.

Maroochy Shire Council then approved the amended development proposal in February 2005, which was a major loss of the natural conservation values for the wallum corridor. It took four years of negotiation between the developer, Department of Main Roads, Department of Natural Resources and Mines and the (then) Environmental Protection Agency for a Master Plan to be agreed upon. Just over 25% of Coolum Ridges was open space, either as conservation area, sporting fields or parks. The national park adjoined the southern boundary of the development. This later became The Ridges at Peregian Springs.

The north-westerly arm of the land was regarded as the **only** remaining viable koala habitat on the coastal lowlands of Maroochy Shire. The entrance to the estate from the Sunshine Motorway became controversial and the State acted to protect the high conservation area.

The MoU between SCEC and the developer FPK to protect conservation values of land that was known koala habitat and a corridor to protected areas later proved to be worthless.

The retention of mature native vegetation buffers was the key to the survival of local wildlife but all this changed in 2008 when the developer bulldozed an area for a shopping centre where it had been agreed that there would be retention of mature trees and terraced car parks. Apparently, the anchor tenant, a major supermarket, wanted higher visibility from the road. The MoU was not binding and this was yet another example of the kind of behaviour that contributes to a lack of trust between conservationists who had negotiated in good faith and the development industry which bows down to economics.

SCEC spent years in negotiation and Court actions were taken to ensure the best possible conservation outcomes for the Peregian Springs/Coolum Ridges developments. Once a Master Plan is approved, no further public notification is required and subsequent approvals to various stages of subdivision are between Council and the applicant.

It highlights the fact that when it comes to private land, compared to Crown land, unless purchase can be negotiated, there will inevitably be losses for the environment overall. The pro bono services of Anthony Walsgott on this and other cases that went to trial is acknowledged with gratitude.



Urban development in the wallum corridor seen from Emu Mountain (Photograph by Elaine Green)

#### Koalas

Koala conservation and habitat restoration had been a key part of the activities of SCEC Member Groups since the 1980s but things were not getting better, they were getting worse. Whilst a species may be protected - too often its habitat is not - and Eucalypts are considered by many as common.

Although facts and figures are often quoted, the data from koala surveys comes mostly from Queensland National Parks & Wildlife and from protected areas only. Most destruction occurs on private lands which also offer the essential connectivity for koalas to move around.

On the Sunshine Coast, only Noosa Shire had worked towards adequate recognition and protection of koala habitat. **Why?** Because Noosa Council did their own koala surveys and put forward a comprehensive plan.

After a few false starts, the State would act belatedly to upgrade the status of the koala from vulnerable to endangered, but not until 2022 when it was almost certainly too late for many koalas trying to survive in coastal environments.

On the positive side, many community groups have undertaken planting to enhance koala habitat and the Sunshine Coast hinterland is now a stronghold for the iconic species.



Koala (Image by Pexels from Pixabay)

# **Chapter 14. New Beginnings**

In the year 2000 SCEC was a hub of activity. The established calendar of events - the World Environment Day Festival, Wallum Wildflower Show at Coolum, the GREENhouse at Woodford - took many volunteers to pull together. In 2000 SCEC also hosted the annual Queensland Conservation State Conference at Elanda Point and regional meetings with Member Groups. SCEC representatives attended Community Cabinet meetings in our region. A Media Workshop was held at Jillian Rossiter's home with presentations from Rosanna Natoli (TV news), John Stokes and Troy Davies (radio) and Bill Hoffman (Sunshine Coast Daily).

In order to spread the load and use the expertise of SCEC members, there were Project Officers, who were also media spokespeople, as follows: Jenifer Simpson, Water and Wastewater Issues; Lindsay Holt, Habitat 2000 implementation, Town Planning and Wallum; Michael Powell, Caloundra Downs; Jim Cash, Maroochy River mouth; Darryl Fry, Noosa issues; Greg Wood, Cooloola Shire issues; Peter James, Mooloolah River clean-up campaign and anti-litter pilot project for the Sunshine Coast; John Burrows, Noosa Cycling Strategy; Steve Nomad and Claude Girral, property management and nursery on Abel Honey property; Bill Burvill, Marine issues including Mudjimba Island anchor protection project.

SCEC was represented on committees for the Caloundra City Planning Scheme, Wide Bay and Regional Coastal Management Advisory Group, Noosa Main Beach consultation group, Tewantin to Tin Can Bay Road community consultation group, Caloundra Downs Planning Process working group, Caloundra City Council Environment Advisory Committee, Maroochy-Mooloolah Catchment Care and many more. SCEC President at the time Darryl Fry said:

"We have communicated, negotiated, disputed, coerced and convened; planned, plotted, provided, produced and perused. We have raised funds, awareness, profile, debate and occasionally tempers. But above all, we are active, proactive and co-active instead of reactive..."



Darryl Fry-former SCEC President and SCEC Project Officer for Noosa issues in 2000

It was a hostile time for environment groups politically. In 2003 the conservative Federal government had announced a "review" of funding for environment groups and in 2005 it was announced that community environment groups that engage in "advocacy" would no longer be funded.

At the end of 2002, hard working SCEC Project Officer Lindsay Holt took a well-deserved break and Karen Robinson stepped in. Karen had been involved in the formative years of SCEC in the 1980s and was familiar with the Sunshine Coast, as well as being a qualified Town Planner. Lindsay returned in August 2003 as a part-time volunteer working effectively fulltime however.

# **The Cane Lands**

The impending closure of the Morton Sugar Mill (Nambour) in December 2003 and the future of the cane lands became a major issue on the Sunshine Coast. It was an opportunity for developers to again try for canal estates on canefields and SCEC was a strong advocate against urban development on the floodplains.

SCEC initially started to develop its own master plan for the 13,000ha (32,123ac) of cane lands and then the Maroochy Council adopted the process. Keith Weir was the SCEC representative on a Council strategy committee.

In association with Development Watch and Coolum Residents and Ratepayers Association, SCEC organised a highly successful public meeting at Coolum in late 2004 where more than 300 residents overwhelmingly passed a resolution opposing urban development on the cane lands. The meeting was told that developers had contracts and options on \$150 million worth of cane land totalling 1,977 ha (4,885ac).



Cane fields seen from Mt Ninderry looking east (Photograph by John Burrows)

Maroochy Shire Council's position was that only cane lands east of the Sunshine Motorway were available for urban development. Caloundra City identified cane farms in the Sippy Creek/Glenview/Meridan Plains area as potential urban areas. But State government planning processes were about to intervene and determine the ultimate fate of large areas of the former cane lands with their SEQ Regional Plan.

# **SEQ Regional Plan**

In the lead up to the release of the first draft SEQ Regional Plan in October 2004, SCEC worked with conservation groups in Brisbane and the Gold Coast, Queensland Conservation Council, Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland and Traditional Owners to develop an agreed policy position. SCEC became part of the new SEQ Regional Environment Coordination Network to publicise issues and make submissions to the draft plan.

The future of areas such as Caloundra South, Palmview and Twin Waters West were effectively sealed by the State government's SEQ Regional Plan. Its subsequent "reviews" have unfolded massive population growth into the foreseeable future in the southern end of the Sunshine Coast.

A huge battle was about to happen between local government and the State that would reveal how disempowered local governments were when it came to largescale urban development on the Sunshine Coast and elsewhere.

# **New Directions for SCEC**

The settlement of the long-running Abel Honey Court case resulted in a significant legacy left to SCEC. A separate legal trust was set up to manage and grow the fund and this enabled the employment of key staff.

The "environment" had become an increasingly complex arena and no longer simply nature conservation - as the issues that arose during this decade demonstrate. It demanded professionalism and a full time effort.

After decades of relying totally on volunteers, SCEC embarked on a new direction by employing professionals.

David Brown became the first SCEC Manager and Scott Alderson was employed in 2004 with Lindsay Holt's "alleged" retirement.

Scott came from The Wilderness Society and one of his first local campaign issues was a proposal by Australia Zoo for up to 48 helicopter joy flights a day for 363 days a year. Originally the plan was to include the Glasshouse Mountains, home to 3 nesting pairs of the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo and Glossy Grey Goshawks, but a SCEC led protest had this cancelled within 2 days.



The iconic Glass House Mountains (Photograph by John Burrows)

So-called "cultural flights" across the Pumicestone Passage remained however on the agenda. SCEC organised 2 protests that attracted hundreds of people. It was a drawn out issue with a Court appeal that was eventually withdrawn due to public protest.

Ian Christesen then became the third SCEC Manager and with him came some big changes.



Noosa Mayor Bob Abbot (left) with Ian Christesen (Photograph by Jillian Rossiter)

In February 2006 the last hard copy newsletter appeared and e-bulletins took over. The last *Eco Echo* magazine came out in Summer 2005 and April-May 2006 marked the beginning of a totally new style tabloid publication, the *Eco* newspaper. It was a free newspaper distributed widely and designed to reach more people. The *Eco* newspaper was to continue until December 2014 and provided very credible exposure for SCEC and importantly for local and global environmental issues.

# **Climate Change**

In 2002 the debate about whether Australia should ratify the Kyoto protocol focussed on economics rather than the environment. The Federal government was more concerned with European countries putting trade barriers against Australian exports and that Australian investment would go "offshore" - than committing to reduced emissions.

The front page of the first *Eco* outlined the *Power to Change* Sustainable Energy Expo, which was a collaborative venture between SCEC, the University of the Sunshine Coast and SEQ Catchments. The two main drawcards on the speakers' program were Dr Graham Pearman, CSIRO Division of Atmospheric Research and Ian Lowe, President of the Australian Conservation Foundation talking on climate change.

Climate change was undoubtedly the biggest environmental challenge facing the planet yet "deniers" were rife, especially in the Howard government.

In 1989, when the media and environmental groups around the world started to talk about the "hole" in the ozone layer and the *greenhouse effect*, it was condemned as alarmist. Predictions of severe weather events associated with rising global temperatures were not taken seriously and the link between human activities and the use of fossil fuels was hotly negated by many in power.

The release of the Al Gore movie in 2006 An Inconvenient Truth brought a groundswell of awareness around the issues of climate change. SCEC campaigner Scott Alderson spoke at the ABC preview showing at the Sunshine Plaza which was attended by several politicians for whom SCEC had secured tickets.

SCEC hosted a presentation of the slide show on which the movie was based at Lake Kawana Community Centre in February and was also involved with other presentations across the coast and hinterland. Matthew Gray, an Al Gore trained presenter provided some Australian context for the main messages of the movie and answered questions from the audience, which enhanced understanding of the issues even for those who were reasonably well versed.

In 2007, in a departure from an established convention, SCEC held World Environment Day at Twin Waters in conjunction with the *Toward 2020 Climate Change Expo*. It was designed to enable people to adopt sustainability in their own lives, featuring everything from solar power systems, greenhouse friendly renovations and hybrid vehicles to sustainable food and finance. An afternoon "Hypothetical" hosted by Professor Ian Lowe was thoughtprovoking and entertaining.



Professor Ian Lowe (Photograph by Jillian Rossiter)

SCEC provided submissions and comments into numerous government policies and documents including the Federal government's emissions targets; State government's Climate Change Strategy; the Garnaut report; a Green Paper on the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme; and the Federal renewable energy targets. These submissions were followed up with extensive media releases and comment.

SCEC consistently called for renewable energy targets of 40%; suspension of new coal mines and a sustainable population strategy. SCEC awareness raising activities around climate change included the Climate Change Relay, the Walk against Warming and promoting Earth Hour.

Proponents of nuclear power were quick to promote nuclear as the answer to climate change. Thanks largely to the work of Keryn Jones and Scott Alderson, Maroochy Shire Council declared a nuclear free zone – joining the much earlier declaration of Noosa. Although not statutory, it is an important symbolic commitment to banning nuclear power and weapons. In 2007, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, speaking at the National Climate Summit at Parliament House, described climate change as *the greatest moral challenge of our generation.* 

The rhetoric continued and SCEC worked to highlight positive initiatives for sustainability in building, energy and biodiversity restoration to combat climate change through the *Eco*.

Nearly 20 years later, climate change is accepted by 97% of the world's scientists and has become somewhat of a test of global cooperation - at which we seem to be failing badly. Atmospheric carbon levels have risen from 385ppm in 2008-09 to 426ppm and sadly the predictions made in 1989 are being realised on a global scale.

#### **Mary River Madness**

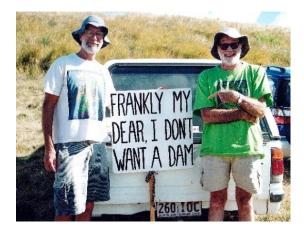
The headlines for the second *Eco* newspaper in June 2006 proclaimed the surprise announcement by the Beattie State government that the Traveston Crossing on the Mary River was the preferred site for a new 'mega dam'.

Premier Beattie stated:

"We are not environmental vandals. We will be working closely with the environment movement to ensure minimal impact on species such as the Mary River Cods, the Mary River Turtle and local lungfish populations." Famous last words indeed.

After public outcry, the proposal was 'watered down' to a two stage proposal. Stage 1 would be the construction of a 180,000 Mega Litre dam by 2011, and Stage 2 the raising of the Borumba Dam, within the Sunshine Coast Regional Council boundaries, by 2025. A final stage, if required, would be an enlarged Traveston Crossing Dam by 2035, estimated to require the resumption of almost 1000 properties if the entire proposal went ahead. The site at Traveston was mostly alluvial flood plain, which meant that the dam would be shallow with an average depth of just 5 m, although the surface area of the dam would be larger than Sydney Harbour.

A lengthy and intense campaign, spearheaded by the Save the Mary Coordinating Group, united locals against the proposal. Despite Beattie's assertion that "...the bulldozers would be rolling in before Christmas", the project still had to be assessed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

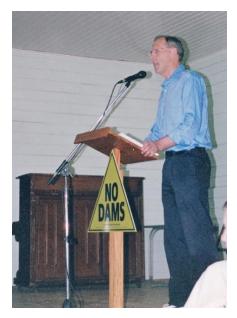


John Burrows (left) and Des Ritchie (Photograph by Jillian Rossiter.)

As part of the campaign there was a huge flotilla of canoes led by Dr Bob Brown, who later spoke to the assembled crowd and the media.



Mary River flotilla (Photograph by John Burrows)



Bob Brown (Photograph by John Burrows)

Meanwhile, around 3000 'No Dam' letters had been posted to Peter Garrett, who was the Federal Minister responsible for the EPBC Act at the time.

After nearly 3 ½ years, on Remembrance Day 11 November 2009, Peter Garrett delivered the verdict in a press conference, stating that the proposal would not proceed because the economic benefits could not overcome the irreversible effects on protected species. It was a huge victory for the environment. The turtles and the cod and the lungfish won their right to continue to live in the Mary – undammed.

# Powerlink – Woolooga to Cooroy and Eerwah Vale Sub-station

When the State government's Infrastructure Plan was released in May 2007, maps showed a high voltage connection from Cooroy South to Coolum. Powerlink Queensland announced plans to run a high transmission line, consisting of 14 lines carrying 275kv with 45 metre high poles, through remnant old growth vegetation west of Eumundi. The proposed route cut through 14 consecutive properties, most of which were under voluntary conservation arrangements, and through a wildlife corridor which included the northern-most colony of the Richmond Birdwing Butterfly. Then Noosa Mayor Bob Abbot described it as a "blow to the community similar to that of the Traveston Dam, the Northern Interconnector Pipeline and the rail re-alignment" saying that the "community was paying dearly for State government decisions".

Powerlink Queensland is in fact a registered public company owned by the Queensland government that operates high voltage electricity transmission infrastructure. This was seen as another State government assault by many and the Powerline Action Group Eumundi (PAGE) formed in opposition to the project, working closely with SCEC and the local State member, MP Peter Wellington, to oppose the powerline.

This campaign was also a catalyst for the SCEC Solar Rooves project. Ultimately, as electricity demand declined, partly thanks to large scale PV (photovoltaic) solar uptake, the Powerlink project did not go ahead.



# 10,000 Solar Rooves Program

In the early 2000s, SCEC had promoted the of rooftop untapped potential ΡV (photovoltaic) solar to reduce carbon emissions as well as electricity demand. At that time there was virtually zero uptake in suburban Australia, despite generous government feed in tariffs available, and there were no mainstream photovoltaic installers on the Sunshine Coast.

In 2008, SCEC conducted a successful trial of 10 x 1 kW systems in Caloundra, after which the SCEC 1,000 Solar Rooves program was launched. The program was hugely successful and soon became the 10,000 Solar Rooves program.

In 2009, the PV solar industry began to take off nationwide and was mainstream by 2010, so SCEC's advocacy was no longer required. However, the fact that Caloundra in particular, and the Sunshine Coast more generally, were the postcodes with the most PV rooftops in the nation for a number of years can be at least partly attributed to SCEC's Solar Rooves program.

# More Population Growth

As the first decade of the 2000s came to an end, the issue of population growth again surfaced as a major concern. The SEQ Regional Plan had actually set mandatory population targets for local government areas.

#### SCEC campaigner Annie Nolan wrote:

"The issue of unsustainable population growth is the underlying root cause in all issues on which SCEC campaigns – water, waste, development, climate change, biodiversity, planning schemes etc. SCEC has campaigned strongly through its submissions and activities that the population levels for the Sunshine Coast must not be arbitrarily dictated by the State government forecasts of population growth but must be determined by a sustainable carrying capacity which is dependent upon the biophysical constraints of the region, coupled with the values of the community for liveability, character and amenity."

# **Caloundra South**

Caloundra South was a development with a very long gestation that was first mooted in 1987. The proposal was for a "satellite city" 7km south-west of Caloundra on 6,400ha (15,814ac) of land with a proposed \$20 million tunnel under Pumicestone Passage to link Bribie Island. It was to include both urban and rural residential development, tourism and marina projects. Conservationists sprang into action, there was considerable community opposition and the Federal government became involved because it required foreign investment approval. The foreign investment was withdrawn in 1991 and the proposal appeared to lapse.

It re-surfaced in 1999 after joint venture partners Kawana Estates and the Lensworth Group spent a year preparing land investigation studies for 3,700ha (9,143ac) of the land and set up 4 consultation groups that included an Environment and Conservation Stakeholder Working Group. It was an open and very professional process that came up with scenarios which included forestry and conservation and rural residential and urban development.

Coincidentally, initial public consultation on the CAMCOS rail corridor also began in January 1999 and by March 1999 the route from Beerwah to Maroochydore had been announced. The corridor was protected from development in 2001, designed to provide a single track. This enabled planning for the development to proceed with more certainty.

SCEC was involved from the beginning and made submissions pointing out the fact that the Caloundra Downs area, as it was then known, was recognised in the SEQ 2001 planning process and the Regional Framework for Growth Management as Open Space. The concept of "Noosangatta" with continuous development from Coolangatta to Noosa gained currency. Of course, the drainage through the site to the Pumicestone Passage was the primary environmental concern.

The area had been substantially cleared for pine plantations and it is interesting to note that the land use studies found that Christmas bells had emerged after the pine trees had been cleared on low lying sections of the land. In 2004 Lensworth (a subsidiary of Foster's) sold its residential division, the Lensworth group, to developer Stockland for \$825million which brought a new negotiating partner to the table for Caloundra Downs – described as potentially home to more than 30,000 people subject to final approvals.

When the first SEQ Regional Plan came out in 2005, it introduced the concept of the urban footprint and maps showed urban areas from Maroochydore to Caloundra and west to the highway at Beerwah, encompassing the Caloundra Downs/South site and much more. The Plan also stated that "to preserve the identities of both the Sunshine Coast and Greater Brisbane, the Regional Plan protects the inter-urban break between these two urban communities." The extent of the inter-urban break was however not defined.

It was a downhill run after that and in 2008 the State governments SEQ Land Supply Review identified Caloundra South and Palmview as two priority development areas and the new Sunshine Coast Regional Council was told to make them "developer ready" within 12 months. To its credit, Council came up with what it called a "pilot" incorporating sustainability and infrastructure principles on a large scale.

The project area was then included in the Urban Footprint in 2009 and on the 18th December 2009, the Minister for the Department of Infrastructure and Planning declared Caloundra South a Master Planned Area under section 132 of the Sustainable Planning Act 2009. The Act required the Council to prepare a Structure Plan and include it within their Planning Scheme. The Council had determined to create an outstanding transit-oriented, sustainable community on the site and had devoted a lot of resources to incorporating this into the planning.

This was subsequently swept aside by State planning processes that culminated in a "takeover". On 5 October 2010, Premier Anna Bligh announced that the Caloundra South development would be taken away from the Council and come under the State's newly created Urban Land Development Authority (ULDA). Greg Hallam, CEO of the Local Government Association Queensland (LGAQ) declared it "a dangerous precedent", accusing the State of using its powers to "suspend democracy" and saying: "It's a developers' dream – fast tracking, no community say and no appeals."

The State substantially amended the Council's plan by removing the best practice standards for sustainable development, changing the maximum proposed population of 46,250 to a minimum, reducing the highway buffer from 200 metres to 80 metres in width and removing requirements for rehabilitation and vegetation offsets.

The ULDA released its draft planning scheme for Caloundra South in April 2011 and it was approved in October 2011, providing for around 20,000 dwellings by 2045 and a number of mixed use retail and commercial centres. Urban Living zones allowed for buildings of up to five-storeys and densities of 35 dwellings per hectare. However, the major centre allowed up to ten-storeys with a minimum residential density of 60 dwellings per hectare to be achieved by apartment blocks.

This was high density living to a standard never before seen on the Sunshine Coast - justified in the name of affordable housing and 15,000 new jobs.



Years of community submissions, meetings and concerns were cast aside and the fate of Caloundra South was sealed for the next 30 years, to become effectively the "satellite city" proposed in 1987 albeit without the tunnel to Bribie Island. Sunshine Coast Regional Council Mayor, Bob Abbott, spoke strongly in defence of an interurban break between Caloundra Road and Donnybrook Road, north of Caboolture, saying that preserving the break was "a lot more than having a few trees down the side of the Bruce Highway". The 4km frontage to the Bruce Highway of this development was a key part of this but in 2024 it seems to have largely disappeared, perhaps to be replaced with sound mounds and landscaping.

On 1 February 2013, the Urban Land Development Authority became Economic Development Queensland (EDQ) and Caloundra South became a declared Priority Development Area under the Economic Development Act 2012. The EDQ was now responsible for all development applications in Caloundra South, completely removing local government from the process of approvals.

The development site is criss-crossed by Lamerough Creek, Bells Creek North and Bells Creek South that all drain into the Pumicestone Passage, which forms part of the Moreton Bay Ramsar Wetland. Riparian corridors were included in so-called greenspace that comprised a reported 38% of the site. The development required Federal approval under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act and had been referred to the responsible Minister in June 2011.

Federal approval under the EPBC Act was forthcoming in June 2013 with 19 conditions that include the developer conducting and publishing an annual compliance audit. An Infrastructure Agreement between Council, Stockland and the State was finalised after four years of negotiations and took effect in November 2015.

The pieces were all in place and the development is set to continue over a 30-year timeframe and to include 20 schools, a 200ha town centre and 200km of bikeways. The Caloundra South Master Planned Community was later re-branded as "Aura – City of Colour" (Aura) for marketing purposes in October 2015.

It is the largest master planned community development undertaken in Australia by a single ownership entity, covering 24 sq km.



Aura in 2017 (Aerial by Darryl Jones)

SCEC was at the forefront of challenging this project. Several years of campaigning and representations with all levels of government, helped raise awareness of the enormity of this project and also resulted in a more stringent assessment under the EPBC Act and subsequent conditions.

SCEC continues a level of oversight, particularly in relation to environmental compliance and ecological matters and participates in a stakeholder reference group facilitated by Stockland. The group has co-ordinated further input into the Master Plan that includes the largest wetland rehabilitation and stormwater treatment project in Australia. Aura is a 6 star Green Community which is intended to mandate the highest environmental and sustainability standards.

SCEC with Member Groups in the area continue however to fight for Halls Creek, a 1,260ha (3,113ac) parcel of land in the catchment of Halls Creek that adjoins Aura to the south, and to define and protect the interurban break based on property boundaries.

# **Growth Management**

When public consultation on the revised South East Queensland Regional Plan was announced for December 2009 to April 2010, Anna Bligh decided to host a two-day Queensland Growth Management Summit in March 2010 in Brisbane. It was a massive public relations exercise selling the government's policies. On the Sunshine Coast, a community sponsored sustainable population forum at Lake Kawana Community Centre called *The State we're in – Stop Squeezing the Life out of the Sunshine Coast* was held, along with other events focussed on population growth across the SEQ region, designed to feed in to the State Summit. The Sunshine Coast forum was attended by 300 people who generally opposed high growth and high rise scenarios for the future.

At the opening of the State Growth Management Summit in Brisbane in March 2010, around 100 Sunshine Coast residents joined a protest outside the event, demanding restoration of planning powers to the Council and removal of the mandatory dwelling targets from the SEQ Regional Plan. There were calls for a State population policy with equal emphasis on environmental and social as well as economic sustainability. The State compiled a summary of outcomes from its Summit which was released in May 2010 and noted that discussion around growth management was ongoing.



Jill Chamberlain (left) and Narelle McCarthy at the 2010 protest (Photograph by John Burrows)

# Chapter 15 Towards 2020

#### Staffing changes

At the SCEC office, the position of Executive Officer was created in the lead up to the 2010--11 year and Wiebe Ter Bals commenced in the position on 20 April 2010. The role was created to alleviate the workload of the campaigner/coordinator and to provide a resource dedicated to the management and long term viability of the organisation. Narelle McCarthy took leave and then returned as Campaigns Manager after Annie Nolan took up a position with Sunshine TAFE. Each person brought amazing expertise to SCEC.



Weibe Ter Bals





Narelle McCarthy

Annie Nolan

Former SCEC President Vivien Griffin became the volunteer Climate Action Project Officer, which enabled SCEC to focus on a global issue at the local level.



Vivien Griffin

The first event of the Climate Action Project was the Climate Rally held in November 2013, as part of the National Day of Action, which saw some 500 people assemble at Nambour to send a message that Sunshine Coasters wanted action on climate change. That event was the catalyst for significant growth in supporters. Other events held were the *Earth Hour Unplugged* concert at Cotton Tree where about 400 people gathered. SCEC also coordinated the *Symphony by the Sea* event at Coolum.

#### Campaigns

Meanwhile, the Caloundra South campaign continued to dominate the agenda with the State's insistence that Sunshine Coast Council include the area known as Hall's Creek as an investigation area in their planning scheme.

The change of government at the State level in 2012 brought new threats to the environment. The new government called for expression of interest for commercial developments **within** national parks. There were 47 proposals received and among them a plan to construct a zipline through the tree tops in Kondalilla National Park in 2014.



Kondalilla Falls (Photograph by John Burrows)

The plan was for a series of suspension bridges, traverse cables, so-called air platforms and tree platforms over a distance of 2.1 km to provide the zipline experience. The access was steep and narrow, so the operators proposed to bring in people by bus from Montville. The Jinibara First Nations People were promised training and employment opportunities and receipt of an undefined percentage of turnover from the operations. SCEC worked with the National Parks Association of Queensland calling for reinstatement of the cardinal principle of management of national parks under the Nature Conservation Act.

Along with Conondale Range Conservation and the community the campaign continued for 2 years. Another change in State government in February 2015 brought a reprieve and SCEC immediately called on the Palaszczuk government to abide by its election commitment not to support a commercial zipline in the Kondalilla National Park. The proposal did appear to falter after Labor took office, but it took until May 2016 for the government to provide some legislative backing to raise the level of protection in national parks.

Another plan by the Newman State government was for a 500ha (1,235ac) motorsports precinct within the environmentally sensitive Mooloolah Logging Area in the Beerwah State Forest. Like the zipline, the motocross track proposal faded away with the change of government, but an even bigger threat to the forest area was on its way.

What is called the Mooloolah Logging Area is divided into four sections, intersected by the Steve Irwin Way and the Bruce Highway. Collectively it constitutes around 880 ha (2,174ac) of native forest which provides significant habitat for rare and threatened species. It has been assessed as having extremely high conservation values and is an important bioregional vegetation corridor. It was to have been converted under the 1999 SEQ Forests Agreement into protected status, however this did not eventuate.

During 2014, plans were revealed by government for a massive upgrade to the Bruce Highway at its southern connections to the coast. The Caloundra Road interchange was to take 24ha of the northern part of Beerwah State Forest – a part that included old growth forest with trees estimated at 300 years old.

The Save Steve Irwin Way Forest Group sprang into action, supported by SCEC and WPSQ, and campaigned relentlessly for modification to the design, which was due for release in 2016 with work to begin later in that year.

Following a detailed submission by SCEC the Federal Environment Minister declared the project to be a 'controlled action' requiring formal assessment under the EPBC Act. These combined efforts resulted in a reduction of the interchange footprint from 100ha (247ac) in the 2013-14 design to approximately 6-8ha (15-20ac) in the final design.

Importantly, in November 2016 the Palaszczuk government announced that 744 ha (1838ac) of the Beerwah State Forest would transition into national park.



Blackbutt tree trunk (Photograph by John Burrows)

#### Sekisui House at Yaroomba

On the quiet Yaroomba Beach two species of marine turtles have been coming in the summer months to nest for centuries. These are the Loggerhead turtle, now classified as Endangered, and the Green turtle which is classified as Vulnerable. This pattern of behaviour has co-existed with human use even after the Hyatt developed a golf course adjacent to the beach. However, in 1995 Lend Lease applied to redevelop the site and despite vigorous community opposition the Council approved the development in 1997. The concept was for 5 residential nodes with up to 450 dwellings of 2 - 3 storeys and a beach clubhouse of four-storeys.

Then, in 2010 Sekisui House purchased most of the site which was developed in accordance with a Master Plan and in 2014 bought the remaining beachside parcel of land. The name 'sekisui' is said to come from an ancient Chinese classic by Sun Tzu called the *Art of War* and indeed this marked the beginning of a community "war" against the new development proposal, that was to last for a decade. Their new plan included a high rise hotel up to 12 storeys, 2,300 apartments including high rise, 300 townhouses and 3,000sq m of retail and entertainment. It was a scale totally out of context with surrounding areas and totally against Council planning documents. Nonetheless the Mayor announced his support for the proposal and during the 2014 review of the planning scheme, indicated support for the Sekisui House development that could well affect the whole of the coast.

When Sekisui House released their final concept plan it was for two seventeen-storey towers on the beachfront, 1,470 apartments and 3,000sq m retail space.

Development Watch and SCEC sprang into action and a rally was attended by around 2,000 people.



OSCAR (Organisation Sunshine Coast Association of Residents) conducted a survey that indicated 73% of people opposed any increase to the permitted height and density of property developments in their area. When Council adopted the Planning Scheme 2014 it maintained that development on the site could only proceed in accordance with the existing Master Plan.

The State government, under leadership of Campbell Newman, then demanded that Council amend the Planning Scheme to benefit Sekisui House. A huge campaign increased community opposition against the development proposal and to its credit Council voted 10:1 not to amend the Planning Scheme in April 2015. Undeterred, Sekisui House launched a marketing campaign and in May 2017 lodged a new application for high density residential development of more than 1,000 dwellings in buildings up to seven-storeys, the original proposed retail space and a seven-storey, 220 room hotel - which required over-riding the Planning Scheme.

Fortunately, this allowed public submissions and when these closed in January 2018 more than 12,000 were received. Sekisui House responded by reducing the scale of the development and in June 2018 Council approved the revised development in a vote of 6:5 despite a record number of submissions against it. Community opposition was well organised with a coalition consisting of Development Watch, Save Yaroomba, Friends of Yaroomba and SCEC.



Subsequently Development Watch (First Appellant) and SCEC (Second Appellant) lodged an application against the development in the Planning and Environment Court. SCEC's representative Narelle McCarthy said:

"This was a massive undertaking not only for SCEC, who were self-represented but also for the community in taking up this massive but necessary legal challenge. While SCEC was concerned about the range of grounds raised in the appeal, we focused on the potential significant impacts on the endangered loggerhead turtle population and its habitat.

Three intensive weeks of trial in the Maroochydore Planning and Environment Court saw the culmination of our joint community appeal concluded on 6th December 2019. We mounted a strong appeal in the face of substantially larger legal representation for both Council and Sekisui House.

The conclusion of the trial marked the culmination of well over twelve months of concerted fundraising and significant effort to ensure our appeal was as strong as it possibly could be... After an anxious but quietly optimistic wait of almost 6 months, following the conclusion of the intense three- week Planning & Environment Court trial in late 2019, we were devastated (to say the least!) by the judgment handed down by Her Honour Judge Kefford on 25 May 2020 dismissing our appeals.

While there was much to be disappointed over and digest, the Judge noted in her judgment that the expert witnesses for the turtle and lighting aspects of the trial had recommended amendments to the original Conditions of Approval. Her Honour subsequently gave instructions that these amendments be incorporated into revised conditions of approval. These revised conditions were to be circulated to the various Parties by 8 June and listed for review in Brisbane on 15 June 2020 for the purpose of making final orders in the appeal. A marathon review by Her Honour Judge Kefford saw the First and Second Appellants press for, and achieve, improved conditions to protect endangered marine turtles.

While we remain deeply concerned about the potential impacts from this inappropriate development, particularly on nesting and hatching loggerhead turtles, SCEC and the community will continue to hold the developer and the Sunshine Coast Regional Council to account. The final conditions mandate a statistically valid pre-construction light survey, annual surveys during the turtle nesting season, and post-construction surveys after completion of every stage...



Baby turtle -at Caloundra (Helen Kershaw)



These statutory conditions at least gave some hope for the turtles albeit under unfortunate circumstances and in the face of a contentious approval. That contentious Planning & Environment Court decision to uphold Council's approval warranted further scrutiny... So, after careful consideration of legal advice and based on the unwavering and enormous opposition to the Sekisui House proposal, Development Watch lodged a Notice of Appeal in the Queensland Supreme Court on 24 July 2020. The full day Hearing before three Supreme Court judges was held on 10 March 2021."

Unlike the Planning & Environment Court case, SCEC was not a legal party to this appeal but strongly supported Development Watch and the other incredible community groups involved in this fight. A concerted community fund raising campaign funded the legal appeal, alleging that the Sunshine Coast Council had changed its planning scheme to allow the development to proceed.

These heroic efforts were rewarded when the Supreme Court verdict ruled in favour of Development Watch and Friends of Yaroomba, identifying three "errors in law" relating to Council codes specifying building heights. Interestingly, the judgement took into account community expectations and the number of submissions against the development, proving that it is always worthwhile to object! However, what this actually meant was that the Environment & Planning Court now had to review its previous decision. Development Watch again became the First Appellant and SCEC the Second Appellant. Narelle McCarthy commented that "We won't give up until we have Saved Yaroomba."

To cut a **very long** story short, the Planning & Environment Court dismissed the appeal and Development Watch again decided to embark on a Supreme Court battle. This was withdrawn however after Sekisui House sold the development site to an Australian company called the Dennis Family Corporation in 2023. Subsequently the former contentious approvals were cancelled at their request and the previous 2007 plans for 330 dwellings of 2 – 4 storeys with a maximum height up to 16 metres reactivated. The significant and sustained community opposition to this over-development at Yaroomba led to a landmark win for the amenity of the area, for proper planning processes and for the turtles.



Lyn Saxton (Development Watch), Jim Moore (Friends of Yaroomba) and Narelle McCarthy (SCEC) celebrate a well-deserved victory



Nesting turtle (Photograph by John Burrows)

#### **Twin Waters West**

Another saga was also unfolding on a 104ha (257ac) site of former cane land bounded by the Sunshine Motorway, Maroochy River and adjoining the Twin Waters residential development. It became the focus of another sustained campaign during this decade and beyond. The State government had included the land in their 2005 SEQ Regional Plan within the Urban Footprint despite it obviously being prone to flooding.

In 2009 Stockland proposed to develop 950 lots (which would require 1.2million cubic metres of fill) with 43.7ha (108ac) retained for conservation purposes. The site contained complex hydrology that included a wetland area and there was also a significant mob of Eastern grey kangaroos in the area isolated on the site. The Sunshine Coast Regional Council, under Mayor Bob Abbot, refused the application for Preliminary Approval to override the Council's planning scheme in which it was not designated for urban development. An appeal by Stockland was subsequently refused by the Planning and Environment Court in 2013. This should have been the end of it, but of course it was not.

After the election of a new Council in 2012, a new Mayor, Mark Jamieson, and a new Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme in 2014, Stockland came out with a revised conceptual master plan with between 650 and 700 lots and a waterway similar to the existing Twin Waters Estate.

In July 2015 Council resolved to progress a planning scheme amendment for the site that was the subject of this second application. The purpose was to change the zoning of the land from 'rural' to 'emerging community' zone, and include the Twin Waters West site in the Maroochy North Shore Local Plan area and inside the Urban Growth precinct.

The State signed off and the amendments were gazetted in March 2018.



Stockland then lodged a new application to build 530 houses and about 364 dwellings within five multiple-dwelling precincts as well as a community hub and a central 19ha (47ac) salt-water lake. Six low-density residential precincts were proposed with a development area of approximately 47 ha (116ac) and 25% to remain as open space.

More variations to the planning scheme were sought to allow for height limit increases from 8.5m to 12m and changes to residential densities. In 2019 Council sought further information, following which changes were made to the plans. The developers agreed to 55 ha of low density lots, 4.9 ha (12ac) of 197 multiple dwellings in two nodes and the retention of high value vegetation.

Additional protection for the kangaroo population was to be achieved by linking natural areas to external conservation areas and other habitats.

Then in July 2020 a newly elected Council rejected the proposal with the Mayor declaring a conflict of interest due to the receipt of \$75,000 in electoral donations. Council's reasons for refusal were that it was not consistent with the Draft Flooding and Stormwater Management Guidelines, that it would cause traffic congestion, and that there were concerns that the wetland ecosystem would be negatively impacted.

It was not long until the developer lodged an appeal against Council's refusal, and this opened up the need for the community to support Council in defending its refusal.

So, SCEC and 10 other parties made up of groups and individuals, joined together as Co-Respondents to the proceedings in September 2020. The appeal against Council's decision filed with the Planning and Environment Court was dismissed on 15 September 2022. His Honour cited in his judgment that allowing the development in its current form risked the "real prospect of detriment and destruction of a nearby wetland." It was a victory for the community and Council.

Unfortunately, given the contentious Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme 2014 amendment which rezoned the 104ha (257ac) parcel on the Maroochy River Floodplain from Rural to Emerging Community Zone, Stockland submitted a new (and its third) development application.

Community groups including Save Twin Waters West, Development Watch and the Sunshine Coast Environment Council continued to oppose the estate on several grounds, including the flood threat, impact on wildlife and the wetlands and the housing density.

Finally, in late 2023 Stockland gained a Preliminary Approval for 450 housing lots on the flood plain with 100 conditions. Although some Councillors argued the plan was too risky to build on the floodplain and stood by the community groups that had been opposing the estate for 14 years, 6 out of 10 councillors voted in favour of the plan and outgoing Mayor Mark Jamieson abstained from the vote. Councillors were quick to highlight that the preliminary approval would only be a guide to the future of the site rather than a deemed approval. Negotiations continued behind the scenes after Stockland lodged an application for "minor" amendments. The development also has to be assessed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and is currently awaiting a decision in October 2024 (at time of print).

In retrospect, the campaign was very important to undertake because, like the Sekisui House campaign, it was against the Council's Planning Scheme and if approved could have created a precedent to similarly "relax" other areas. Community involvement reduced the original planned 1200-1400 residential units (houses and apartments) down to 700 lots and eventually to 450 residential housing lots.

It was also important because there was legal recognition of the importance of the central wetland as a major part of the network of the biodiversity on the site. It was also important because some of the last surviving Eastern grey kangaroos living there and cut off by roads may still have a fighting chance to continue to exist on the site.



Eastern grey kangaroo (Photograph by Elaine Green)

# Don't Rock the Maroochy

From 1959 to 1999 the mouth of Maroochy River was to the north of Pincushion Island. Ever since the 'breakthrough' of the south channel in 1999-2000, Council had been considering options to protect its land-based 'assets'. The geotextile bags were ageing and were deemed to require repair and/or replacement. The ongoing sand nourishment program was considered "successful" but the cost was \$1 million every 2 years. During 2016 approximately 225,000 m<sup>3</sup> of sand had been dredged from a permitted area within the lower reaches of Maroochy River onto Maroochydore Beach.

A report had been commissioned to look at "options" and at its first meeting in January 2017, the Sunshine Coast Council received a consultant's report titled *Maroochydore Beach Nourishment Evaluation and Future Coastal Infrastructure Works*.



High tide with the last Public Holiday for the Christmas, New Year (2016) holiday period at Maroochy River mouth. (Photograph: Greg Miller / Sunshine Coast Daily)

The media was taking a keen interest, Councillors had been well and truly lobbied and the public gallery at the Council meeting was packed. The recommendation of the engineers' report was to "support" the upgrade of the sand bags, but not until a detailed cost-benefit analysis for rock wall options had been carried out. The Mayor moved a motion that further analysis of the economic, tourism, social and environmental impacts of the available options (including the retention of geo-fabric bags) be undertaken. The motion was carried unanimously and a program of public consultation was to be rolled out.

Don't Rock the Maroochy emerged as a vocal and well-organised opponent to rock-walling the river mouth, describing itself as a group of locals and visitors from all walks of life. They pointed out that the original sand bag groynes, in place since 2002-03, had indeed done the job they were intended to do. Of the 3,500 bags originally placed only 66 were damaged 5% bevond repair, and just were recommended for replacement. An estimate of \$150,000 to \$200,000 was obtained to restore the groynes to their original capacity, using the same size sand bags. Compared with Council, which the report to had recommended complete replacement of the geotextile bags and rock walling and closing off channels, this was a modest proposal.

SCEC Honorary Life Member and marine educator Jim Cash, who had already been involved in the 2 previous attempts to interfere with the river mouth, pointed out that the construction of rock walls had many negatives. These included: robbing northern beaches of sand; increasing current velocities along the southern bank of the river adjacent to the caravan park; destroying the sand bar shoals at the mouth which are of regional significance for fish breeding as well as offering a buffer to storm surges inside the river mouth; destroying the natural processes which cause the river mouth to oscillate about Pincushion and destroying the natural beauty of the river.



Jim Cash-still fighting for protection for Maroochy River mouth

The public consultation revealed that people overwhelmingly preferred the sand bags to rock walls. A Maroochy River Estuary Consultation Group was formed to advise Council. When their final report came out it was firmly in favour of staged replacement of the geotextile bags with more robust 10-tonne bags in a herringbone configuration with a potential 50-year life span.

It was therefore a relief that when the motion finally came before Council on 7 December 2017 it was simply to approve the preferred groyne field replacement option of geotextile bags, which was unanimously endorsed.

The process took almost exactly a year and the debate served to highlight that even more than back in 1992 when the first threat was made, people were prepared to unite to protect the natural river mouth of Maroochy River and did not want rock walls.



Work in progress (Photograph by Elaine Green)



Maroochy River North shore remains unchanged thankfully without engineering intervention (Photograph by Elaine Green)

# Backstory

The March/April 2017 edition of a Sunshine Coast news magazine called Backstory contained an article titled "Naturally Protective". It detailed how residents and community groups across the Sunshine coast were fighting against inappropriate developments in their local areas, specifically mentioning Development Watch, Eudlo Creek Neighbours, Coolum Residents Association and OSCAR (Organisation of Sunshine Coast Associations of Residents).

Mayor Mark Jamieson was quoted as saying: "I have yet to see a single, coherent and viable opportunity put forward by some of the community groups that are referred to which would advance prosperity and opportunities for this region – or any idea that would deliver new, enduring employment, desperately needed infrastructure or better services." Reaction in the media was generally condemnatory of these comments. In the *Sunshine Coast Daily* (25<sup>th</sup> May 2017) the Mayor was quoted as saying: "My comments refer to a small number of vocal organisations that are not representative of the broader Sunshine Coast community, although they purport to speak for the majority and who do not put forward ideas and suggestions that would lead to greater employment options or opportunities for the people who live in this region..."

SCEC member group TAPP wrote to the Mayor specifically drawing attention to the work of Night Eyes and Ocean Crusaders in collecting litter. The reply from the Mayor claimed that he had been quoted out of context. In a letter (dated 12<sup>th</sup> June 2017) he clarified that his comments were not directed at OSCAR or the numerous residents' groups on the Sunshine Coast, but at organisations such as the Sunshine Coast Environment Council, RESDEV (Residents for Responsible Development and Development Watch.

Whilst it is certainly not the aim of these groups, including SCEC, to promote new employment and infrastructure - just maybe it shows that they are doing their job, which is to highlight inappropriate development and the social and environmental impacts of new infrastructure.

# **Coolum West**

Land immediately west of the Sunshine Motorway roundabout at Coolum has been the subject of several development proposals, including for canal estates. It was a former cane farm and an area that has been significantly impacted by flooding in the past. Developer Consolidated Properties had applied in 2004 for preliminary approval of a master planned residential community. This was not supported by Council or State government. The 120ha (296ac) site was zoned 'Rural' in the Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme 2014 and was outside the Urban Footprint in the State 2017 South East Queensland Regional Plan.

When a new draft plan eventually surfaced, it was for approximately 1500 residential lots, a hotel, apartments, retail school and light industry with 15 percent available for community sports.

The mixed-use activities included a wave pool that required extraction of water from the Maroochy River to pump through the wave pool and to create waterfront lots. It was in conflict with a number of State and Council planning documents and no formal application was ever actually made to Council.

A coalition of 6 community groups: SCEC, OSCAR, Coolum Residents Association, Friends of Yaroomba, Surfrider Sunshine Coast and Development Watch fought to stop this inappropriate development. The community driven campaign included a petition with nearly 3,000 signatures and over 500 comments. Some eye-catching road side storyboards (see below) were created by talented SCEC volunteer Matthew Lynn and were placed around Coolum but mysteriously disappeared during the campaign. However, the opposition mounted and so the developer lobbied to have the State government declare it a Priority Development Area. This is what had happened at Caloundra South when the State took over.

This assessment process effectively rules out community and Council input. SCEC and the community campaigned vigorously against this idea for 3 years, meeting with politicians and government officers including: MP Kate Jones (then Minister for Tourism), representatives from the Deputy Premier's Office (MP Dr Stephen Miles) and officers from EDQ (Economic Development Queensland), as well as with the developer.

It sat with State government until 2023 when an announcement was made that the development would not be proceeding due to community opposition. This was a major victory and a win for common sense.

Several months later the land was sold to the Sunshine Coast Regional Council for \$6million. The \$6 million land purchase was secured through the SEQ City Deal, a long-term partnership between the Australian Government, Queensland Government and Council of Mayors (SEQ), as part of the Blue Heart initiative.



Roadside sign protesting Coolum West development-Artwork by Mathew Lynn

The former cane land will be rejuvenated back to a natural wetland state and forms one of the largest single land holdings in the 1,700ha Blue Heart.

It is planned to introduce tidal waters to assist a natural transition to a wetland habitat. The site adjoins the Coolum Creek Environment Reserve, which provides fish breeding areas and habitat for threatened species such as the Water Mouse (*Xeromys myoides*) which is listed as vulnerable.



Photo of the Water Mouse (Xeromys myoides)-NPRSR,1999 (photograph from https://apps.des.qld.gov.au/speciessearch/details/?id=724#)



Melaleuca wetlands (Photograph by John Burrows)

#### **Chapter 16. Forty Years Strong**

#### COVID-19



COVID-19 was first reported in December 2019 in the city of Wuhan, Hubei Province, in China. The disease spread rapidly around the world, with the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Australia on 30 January 2020. The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic on 12 March 2020, which heralded years of unprecedented disruptions to life across the globe.



Two weeks after the declaration of a global pandemic, many businesses across Queensland started to close and school students transitioned to remote learning for the first time. It was Queensland's first lockdown, with many more to come.

By April 2020, SCEC had transitioned to working from home and attending meetings online. It was, as for everyone else in the world, a huge adjustment, grappling with how to transition to a digital space and engage with members, staff, volunteers and partners in a new format. New words entered the SCEC lexicon, such as ZOOM!

Public events were curtailed and SCEC's signature event the World Environment Day Festival was reimagined into an online event.

The following year it morphed into a monthlong program of events held in conjunction with member groups and this concept of Green June has continued with great success.



#### **Climate Action**

The 2019-20 Black Summer saw dreadful bushfires across many parts of Australia and the Sunshine Coast did not escape. Habitat and native animals were destroyed Australia-wide, including on the Sunshine Coast, in catastrophic numbers, with estimates of up to 3 billion animals either killed or injured. The fires burnt more than 1.5 million ha (3,706,580 ac) of public and private land, including 1.39 million ha (3,434,764 ac) of forests and parks, plantations and native timber assets, critical animal habitats and water catchments.

This gave rise to further discussion about the expected effects of rising temperatures and climate change into the future.

Noosa Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and was the only local authority in Queensland to do so.



Black Summer bushfires (photograph from Meganesia, CC BY-SA 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>, via Wikimedia Commons.

A coalition of 15 community groups came together in the Urgent Climate Action Network Sunshine Coast group (UCANSC). SCEC hosted regular meetings with the network and produced the campaign materials to generate community support. The campaign focused on encouraging locals to write to their divisional Councillor to express their concerns about the changing climate and request support for the declaration.

After almost 12 months of campaigning, the network was pleased when Cr David Law had forward a Notice of Motion at the November 2021 Sunshine Coast Council Ordinary Meeting. After a lengthy discussion, the final resolution was passed unanimously that Council:

- Acknowledges the significant action already undertaken through the implementation of the Sunshine Coast Council Environment and Liveability Strategy (ELS) 2017 towards mitigation and reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions;
- Accepts the Sixth Assessment Report (August 2021) of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which reveals that the Earth's climate has deteriorated dramatically since they last reported six years ago;

- Recognises that we are in a state of climate emergency that requires urgent and sustained effort to achieve net zero emissions by 2041;
- Request the Chief Executive Officer to prepare an interim report on the progress of the Zero net Emissions Plan and Regional Climate Action Roadmap, including interim recommendations for Council actions and a proposed governance structure/framework that strengthens the daily action of Council in response to the climate emergency, and to present this report for Council's consideration by 31 March 2022.

Whilst the motion did not formally "declare" a Climate Emergency, it certainly acknowledged the emergency and put forward a plan to rapidly reduce emissions and strengthen Council's climate response. In March 2022, the interim report titled 'Responding to the Climate Emergency' was presented which outlined the governance structure and framework along with an update on key bodies of work that were being undertaken by Council to address the climate emergency, with 7 key actions to be led by the Chief Executive Officer.

It was a significant and successful communityled campaign and a milestone in climate action on the Sunshine Coast that will however require ongoing monitoring. A documentary was made to inspire other communities to come together to take action.

Noosa Council's Climate Change Response Plan 2021 sets an ambitious target to transition to net zero emissions by 2026, for Council operations and for the community. Both Noosa and Sunshine Coast Council report annually on their emissions profiles with reporting figures of tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (or tCO2e) for 2019/2020 being 50,000 tonnes (Noosa) and 201,103 tonnes (Sunshine Coast).

The other major focus in the climate campaign was partnering with the Queensland Conservation Council to distribute the brightly coloured *Climate Action Now* signs throughout the region.

The signs were given out free at events and market stalls and people were encouraged to hang them on their letterbox, fence or even stick them on their wheelie bins. The signs are part of a nation-wide campaign to put pressure on both the state and federal government to take bold climate action. The signs are a demonstration that constituents actively support climate action and want to see the political will needed to address the issue.



#### **Nets Out Now**



The controversial shark control program was the subject of a feature-length documentary film titled *Envoy: Shark Cull* which was released in theatres in 2021. This film showcased the true impact of the nets and drumlines in use in both Queensland and NSW and renewed community interest and outrage at their use. Following the release of the film, SCEC joined the *Nets Out Now* Coalition, set up by the Envoy Foundation. The Coalition brings together 32 organisations to advocate for the removal of lethal nets and drumlines.

It is the position of the members of the *Nets Out Now* Coalition that shark culling via the use of shark nets and lethal drumlines is an ineffective method for promoting public safety, providing only a false sense of security to beachgoers. These methods are extremely detrimental to the health and ecological viability of marine life and ecosystems, affecting both 'target' and 'non-target' species. Modern and non-lethal alternatives are available that would improve protection for both beach-goers and marine life within Australian waters.

SCEC continued to advocate for the removal of the lethal nets and drumlines that are installed at 23 beaches throughout the Sunshine Coast and throughout Queensland. Whilst some SMART drumline trials are underway in north Queensland, they have not yet been rolled out here on the Sunshine Coast. Encouragingly however, the first phase of the SharkSmart drone trial occurred in South East Queensland from September 2020 to October 2021 and again throughout the summer school holiday period. Throughout the drone trials all 78 drumlines and 11 nets remained in place across 23 beaches on the Sunshine Coast. As always, the fight continues to work collectively to protect and restore the marine environment.

The unprecedented flooding event in early 2022 had lasting impacts throughout the region. In particular, the effects of marine pontoons disintegrating during floods were felt across the region as hundreds of thousands of small polystyrene pieces littered the beaches. The pontoons washed ashore, after breaking free from moorings in the Brisbane River. A phenomenal community effort was undertaken along with local councils and the State government to try and contain the impacts of the pontoons. Unfortunately, still to this day you can find tiny polystyrene particles along the northern beaches.

#### State Forests

Many of Queensland's native state forests are havens for wildlife, diverse ecosystems and nature-based recreation. Here on the Sunshine Coast, one of these special natural places amongst increasing urbanisation is 'Ferny Forest' - a 130ha (321ac) portion within the Beerwah State Forest, which was earmarked for logging. Beerwah State Forest as a whole contains 4,561 ha (11,270ac), of which just under 600ha (1,482ac) is remnant vegetation. While this northern section of the forest is relatively small, it contains medium regional ecosystem values, with very high values for Koala habitat. Sitting between Ewen Maddock Dam and the Steve Irwin Way, it would make an important and timely addition to the adjoining Mooloolah River National Park.

The rampant, unsustainable urbanisation of the Sunshine Coast makes it more urgent than ever to conserve biodiversity, protect threatened species, sequester carbon and connect with nature. Despite the requirement to adhere to the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) Code of Practice, logging a significant portion of this forest would still have an impact on wildlife through disturbance, modification and loss of habitat and foraging areas.



Narelle McCarthy with Ferny Forest protesters

The fight for Ferny Forest escalated with the newly formed *Save Ferny Forest Group* and the broader community swinging into action. SCEC exercised its evidenced-based advocacy role and engaged with the responsible State MP's, Ministers, the Federal Environment Department, DAF and QPWS on harvest operation planning, all while expressing our concerns for the viability of the forest.

Throughout the campaign SCEC was part of the many community events and gatherings. After many months of campaigning by SCEC, QCC and the Save Ferny Forest community group, Ferny Forest was taken off the timber harvesting schedule, and is due to be transitioned into the conservation estate by the end of 2024.

SCEC was also part of the broader State Forests campaign with the Queensland Conservation Council to have 70,000ha (172,973ac) of high conservation forests in the SEQ Planning Area transition to Protected Area to contribute to the much needed expansion of the Protected Area Estate. There are large areas of high conservation value state forest in the South East Queensland planning region, but more than 40,000 ha (98,842ac) of this precious habitat is still on logging schedules. SCEC continues to work with the broader community and QCC to protect state forests in the broader Sunshine Coast region.

So, while there's more to be done, the Protected Area estate within our region and surrounds is incrementally growing.

# Les Hall Young Conservationist Award

The Sunshine Coast Environment Council also entered a new partnership in the 2020s, with the family of the late Les Hall and Sunshine Coast Council, to present the Les Hall Young Conservationist Award.

As reported on the SCEC website:

The journey for all great conservationists starts with a passion for the environment and a desire to do something to protect it. This award encourages young people to follow in the footsteps of Dr Les Hall and make a difference in their local environment.

Les was a man of action. A forward-thinking man with a vision for a better future for our wildlife and the passion and drive to get on the ground and make that vision a reality. In recognition of what he achieved in the field of wildlife conservation, this award recognises an individual or group who has shown vision, innovation and passion and has achieved an outstanding outcome for wildlife conservation on the Sunshine Coast.

From a young age, Dr Leslie Hall AM (1942-2019) was captivated by the natural world. He learnt from his father that every animal had a specific name and important role to play in the local ecosystem. This led to the foundation of an extensive career in scientific research, teaching and discovery.

Although Les is best known for his pioneering research and advocacy for bats, his knowledge of Australian wildlife and their habitat had few bounds. Putting his knowledge into action was important to Les throughout his career and in his later years living in the Sunshine Coast hinterland.

With true insight, Les said in 2014 "Unless you put it into action, knowledge is not worth having".



SCEC celebrated its 40th anniversary with an evening affair at the 'Green Room' at the Imperial Hotel in Eumundi in May 2021. The night brought together many wonderful people who have shaped the Sunshine Coast environment and played a critical role in SCEC throughout the years, along with many new faces at SCEC as we continue to grow as an organisation. The night featured special panel discussions and reflections on SCEC's 40 years, along with a musical performance by Noel Gardener, Derek Foster and the Landscape Band. (Photography by Cooper Bradley)

Another anniversary event was the book launch of *They Made a Difference* by Elaine Green and Jillian Rossiter. The book was a special anniversary edition of the SCEC Honorary Life Member book which included two new Honorary Life Members: Helen Hutchison and Ian Lowe OAM. The launch featured a Welcome to Country by Aunty Beverly Hand, a long time SCEC supporter and advocate, and a range of talks that reflected on SCEC's history and role in shaping the environment of the Sunshine Coast.



# Koalas are still in Danger

The decline of the iconic Koala in South East Queensland is a direct result of land clearing and urban development. Over the past 10 years 12 pieces of legislation were enacted in an attempt to protect the Koala from extinction. However, the SEQ Koala populations continue to decline at an alarming rate.

The Queensland Koala Expert Panel delivered its final report in late 2017, recommending urgent action to reverse population declines in South East Queensland and secure the longterm survival of the species. Progress on the implementation was frustratingly slow and lacked firm commitment from government, particularly to close planning and development loopholes and exemptions. SCEC joined an alliance of conservation groups, including EDO, QCC and TWS to call for an immediate moratorium on development and tree clearing in Koala habitats across Queensland.



2009 Koala Rally in Brisbane (Photograph by John Burrows)

State government in 2020 finally amended the planning framework to stop clearing within koala priority areas and regulate 385,000 ha (951,355ac) of habitat across South East Queensland.

Koalas were finally officially classified as Endangered in February 2022 under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act – specifically the combined populations of New South Wales, Queensland, and the Australian Capital Territory. South East Queensland has the highest concentration of koalas in the state.

On the Sunshine Coast, Council is still struggling to stop or mitigate development on koala habitat. The Reesville/ Howells Knob area has been identified as a "hotspot" with healthy populations found. Through its Environment Levy it supports research and restoration of public land and has set up a Koala food project in Beerwah in partnership with the Glasshouse Mountains Advancement Network. Hopefully these actions will eventually halt the decline but it remains to be seen.



# Chapter 17 2024 and Beyond

# Native Title

In June 2024 a formal declaration was made that the Kabi Kabi people are, and have always been, the Traditional Owners of what is now the Sunshine Coast and recognised their Native Title claim.

The determination area extends from the Elimbah Creek catchment area, Sandstone Point and Bribie Island north to Cooloola national park, Curra state forest, Mary River and the Isis River. It stops in the east at the coast and in the west at Nambour, Jimna and the Burnett and Coast ranges. The determination area includes Gympie, Noosa, Maroochydore, Caloundra and Mudjimba Island. It covers 365,000ha of land and approximately 20,000ha of waterways.

The court's decision only applies to Part A of the Kabi Kabi people's claim lodged in 2013 with a further 2 stages still to be determined.



Kerry Jones, Kabi Kabi Traditional Owner (Photograph from kabikabination.com.au)

Kerry Jones is a Kabi Kabi man, born on the Sunshine Coast and is one of six Directors of the Kabi Kabi Peoples Aboriginal Corporation. Over the years, Kerry has worked with groups such as Maroochy Waterwatch, Petrie Creek Catchment Care Group and Healthy Land and Water, working with partners to reintroduce traditional burning practices into land management and care for the land. In 2012 the Jinibara People were recognised as the Native Title holders of the western part of the Sunshine Coast Regional Council, parts of Brisbane City Council, and parts of Somerset Regional Council, including the D'Aguilar, Blackall, and Conondale Ranges, and some of the Brisbane River.

The Sunshine Coast area – Kabi Kabi and Jinibara country – contains many Dreaming places, sacred and ceremonial sites. The stories, dances and legends of the First Nations People connect the rivers, islands and the mountains and imbue the landscape with rich meanings.

Native Title recognition is a vital step towards reconciliation and acknowledges the deep and spiritual connection to country that is so important for First Nations People to continue.

It is well overdue recognition that these were our first conservationists, caring for the land and all its interwoven elements Complex systems of environmental management enabled thousands of years of not only survival but prosperity for the land.



The Australian Aboriginal Flag was designed and created by artist Harold Thomas, a Luritja man from central Australia and a member of the Stolen Generations.

#### **Forest Wins**



Glossy Black Cockatoo (Photograph by John Burrows)

With an election due in October 2024, the State government made an announcement that had been in waiting for a decade. Under the Native Timber Action Plan, the government committed to transferring 12,000 hectares (29,652ac) of State Forest into National Parks and Conservation Parks. The land being protected on the Sunshine Coast included:

- around 843ha (2,083ac) of Jimna State Forest and around 576ha (1,423ac) of Yabba State Forest for dedication as part of the existing Wrattens National Park, supporting several threatened species including the Tusked frog, Glossy black-cockatoo and Koala;
- around 657ha (1,623ac) of Peachester State Forest for dedication as part of the existing Glass House Mountains Conservation Park, containing core Koala habitat and providing significant ecological and recreational values for the broader community;
- around 479ha (1,183ac) of Bellthorpe State Forest for dedication as part of the existing Bellthorpe National Park, forming part of a bioregional corridor containing important lowland forest ecosystems and including habitat for species of conservation significance including the Tusked frog, Koala and Cascade treefrog;

- two areas totalling 1,119ha (2,765ac) of Beerburrum West State Forest for dedication as part of the existing Glass House Mountains National Park, providing connectivity and management benefits for the Protected Area Estate in the Sunshine Coast which also contains significant conservation values and habitat;
- around 119ha (294ac) of Luttons State Forest for dedication as part of the Glass House Mountains exiting Conservation Park, containing significant conservation values including the Coochin Hills grevillea and habitat for threatened fauna such as the Central Greater glider and Koala;
- around 479ha (1,183ac) of Yurol State Forest for dedication as part of the existing Tewantin National Park, which will enhance the natural ecosystems and deliver conservation and recreational opportunities for the community, including providing habitat for Koalas.
- around 889ha (2,196ac) of Ringtail State Forest for dedication as part of the existing Tewantin National Park,

With the change of government, conservationists will watch and wait to see whether this commitment is kept by the Liberal National Party government.



Mt Allen, Conondale Ranges National Park (Photograph by John Burrows)

# Portion 480

Not all the loose ends were tied up before the 2024 State election and one that was outstanding was 226ha (558ac) of land still with the rare tenure of Unallocated Crown Land. The land sits strategically behind a 450ha (1,111ac) Environmental Protection Zone earmarked as part of Caloundra South and open space land adjacent to Pelican Waters. It is the remnant of the Bells Creek Critical Nature Conservation Area that was severely impacted by the development of Pelican Waters. It is also sandwiched in between two very large urban developments and the last chance for an ecological corridor amidst a massively growing region.

The Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (Sunshine Coast & Hinterland Branch) and SCEC have been advocating for its gazettal as National Park for four decades. Successive State governments have recognised the ecological values of the land and support its nomination to go into the Protected Estate, but it still hasn't happened!

As one of the few parcels of remnant coastal vegetation remaining (particularly of this size) it is critical for biodiversity, climate, flood mitigation, green space and amenity. As is unfortunately sometimes the case, so-called "green" areas become targets for infrastructure such as roads and railways. The CAMCOS heavy rail project had been planned since the 1990s and was mapped to be constructed on the western boundary of Portion 480.

With the Olympic Games scheduled for 2032 and involving Sunshine Coast venues, the construction of the railway from Beerwah to Caloundra was announced, but still no commitment made to securing Portion 480 for conservation. A new threat in the form of a road network connecting Caloundra South to Pelican Waters to reduce the not unexpected traffic congestion is currently (in 2024) holding up finalising what is left for conservation purposes.



Coastal banksia (Photograph by John Burrows)

#### **Coastal Emu Reserve Proposal**

With the rapid emergence of new suburbs and eventually a new City centre at Caloundra South, the area is under enormous ecological threat. Bells Creek has been the "accepted" boundary of urban development until now but is it just a matter of time before urban sprawl and associated infrastructure destroys this remaining area of natural environment?

Fortunately, the old Caloundra City Council in partnership with State and Federal governments purchased forested private property holdings adjacent to Pumicestone Passage wetlands in the 1990s. Around 750ha was purchased in the Hall's Creek and Coochin Creek areas. The Sunshine Coast Council has since purchased some adjoining land adjacent to Coonowrin Creek estuary and a former Scientific Reserve has been converted to National Park.

With the State government refusing to rule out development in the catchment of Halls Creek, this area becomes a vitally important ecological link. This is an area of enormous biodiversity supporting 10 regional ecosystems including the Mt Emu she-oak (Allocasuarina emuina), Tiny Wattle (Acacia baueri), Whipstick Wattle (Acacia attenuate), Submerged spikerush (Eleocharis difformis), Greater Swamp-orchid (Phaius tankervilleae) and Swamp Stringybark (Eucalyptus conglomerate) which are all on the verge of extinction. It is a last refuge for many native animals in the area.

A visionary proposal has been put forward by WPSQ (Sunshine Coast & Hinterland Branch) to keep and expand this area of connectivity for both flora and fauna, in view of the fact that urban development may breach this unofficial "boundary" in the future. This area could provide a place to relocate the Coastal emu and other species as development closes in on them.

The concept of "rewilding" has been extremely successful in other places and this could be a first for the Sunshine Coast if the authorities can see the vision.

The Coastal Emu once roamed the plains along the Sunshine Coast and has become another victim of development. Seeking sanctuary in remaining protected areas on the fringes of urbanisation, its numbers have vastly diminished. The *Sunshine Coast News* reported in 2023 that one Emu, which has been named 'Fluffy' was living at the 655ha Parklands Conservation Park, to the eastern side of the Bruce Highway between Nambour and Bli Bli. The Department of Environment and Science said, via its Parks and Forests website, that there are actually two Emus "roaming the park".

Sadly, this park is in line to host mountain biking events at the 2032 Olympic Games, with details yet to be revealed on what changes could be made to the park and its surrounds and any possible effects that could have on the environment and the Emus. Relocation to a "safe" area could save the last coastal Emus.



The 'photogenic Emu' at Parklands. Picture: Steve Roberts. (Photograph from *sunshinecoastnews.com*https://www.sunshinecoastnews.com.au/2023/06/15/frien dly-and-fluffy-emu-joins-the-running-fun/

# The Regional Inter-Urban Break (IUB)

The focus of land conservation efforts has moved to the southern boundaries of the Sunshine Coast since the State government took over planning for Caloundra South. A lot of the land is current or former pine plantations, which makes the remaining natural areas even more important. The huge scale of the proposed developments over the ensuing three decades makes the urgency to secure the boundaries of the IUB greater.

Despite ongoing support from Sunshine Coast Council and the community for the IUB to separate the Sunshine Coast region from Greater Brisbane, State government has refused to define the IUB. It consists of 6,300ha that includes land in the area known as Hall's Creek purchased by Stockland, which State government seems to be favouring for future urban development.

SCEC joined with a number of community groups to form a community alliance called Protect Our Regional Inter-Urban Break Alliance (yes...PORIUBA). The campaign is for statutory protection of the full extent and outstanding values of the Sunshine Coast's Regional IUB. Currently (in 2024) the Alliance is comprised of Take Action for Pumicestone Passage (TAPP), Caloundra Residents Association (CRA). Caloundra Liveability Alliance, Wildlife Preservation Society (WPSQ), Sunshine Coast & Hinterland Branch, the Organisation of Sunshine Coast Association of Residents (OSCAR) and the Sunshine Coast Environment Council (SCEC). This Alliance collectively represents some 15,000 members and a wider community of supporters and allies.

The Sunshine Coast Council has supported the IUB since 2014 and now a decade later it seems only the State stands in the way of securing a greenbelt for the future of flora, fauna and recreation for now and for future generations.

#### Stand Up for Nature



SCEC joined QCC's Stand Up for Nature campaign in 2024 because despite the enormous efforts of so many people over so many decades, more than 300,000ha of forest and woodland are still being bulldozed every year. Only 8.2% of Queensland is in the Protected Areas Estate and there are 1,049 threatened species that need protection.

The aims of the campaign are to double Queensland's Protected Areas by 2030; to introduce strong laws to end deforestation; better planning laws to protect nature; and to create an independent Environment Protection Agency (EPA). Elections often provide great stimulus for governments to act and in the case of the independent EPA this goal was achieved with a commitment only 2 weeks before the 2024 election. Whether it is implemented remains to be seen, but it is a fact that Queensland is the only state without an independent EPA to enforce laws to protect nature. It could stop the illegal deforestation that is still occurring that includes 8,000ha of endangered forest ecosystem, being cleared every year.

SCEC's Narelle McCarthy was quoted in the media as saying:

"This commitment signals an important milestone in environmental protection, regulation and decision making for Australia's most biodiverse state. Boasting three adjacent UNESCO Biosphere Reserves - Great Sandy, Noosa and the Sunshine Coast - there is an obligation to protect and conserve our outstanding natural assets, wildlife and places. An independent EPA will play a crucial role in preserving and restoring biodiversity "

# **Smart Regional Planning**

2024 marked 20 years since the concept of a Regional Plan for SEQ was announced and subsequently there have been several iterations. It was supposed to "manage" the population growth, rationalise infrastructure and provide protection for natural areas. Instead, it seems to be planning for more population growth and more infrastructure at the expense of nature.

A coalition of conservationists and scientist have advanced a new concept for smart regional planning with "no go" for development zones and clear conservation zones. This initiative urges the State and Federal Government to fulfil their 2022 promise to establish bioregional plans in Queensland. Although a recent \$2 million commitment in the State Budget will expand this team from 3 part-time to 8 full-time staff to develop the bioregional plans, the 2024 election could reduce or eliminate this staffing.

#### Nuclear Power (not again!)



Some campaigns seem to be "won" at the time only to resurface years later with new advocates. In the 1980s SCEC and many community groups across Australia and the world were actively protesting against the nuclear industry in its many guises - from uranium mining and transportation to nuclear weapons and food irradiation.

A food irradiation facility was first proposed at Brisbane in the 1980s but was defeated by community opposition, then for Yandina, which again did not go ahead. However, a gamma radiation plant at Narangba near Caboolture did go ahead with the blessing of the State and Local governments, despite a community appeal to the Planning and Environment Court in 2000.

For more than a decade Queenslanders have embraced rooftop solar to reduce dependency on the grid and even more so as electricity prices increase, with the state having the highest rate of solar panel installation in Australia. Federal government policy has facilitated expansion of renewable energy as a proven way to reduce emissions in the face of climate change and to meet commitments to emissions reduction targets.

It came as a bolt out of the blue in 2024 when Peter Dutton, as Leader of the Federal Opposition, announced an election policy to build 7 nuclear reactors, of which 2 were proposed in Queensland at Tarong and Gladstone. Closer scrutiny revealed that as part of this proposal the life of most of the existing coalfired power stations would be extended for at least another 12 years. This would effectively increase emissions.

The Opposition plan was to tear up previously agreed emissions reduction targets and delay action on cutting climate pollution until the nuclear power stations started up in the 2040s.

The added lure of "cheaper" power with nuclear generation has been contested by many experts. CSIRO modelling has consistently found that nuclear is more than four times more expensive than renewables backed by storage.

The Federal Opposition plan completely fails to explain how the safety of communities living and working near a facility would be protected; how and where nuclear waste would be stored and how the Federal government would overturn bans for "no nuclear" in place by some State governments. It also represents a reversal of previous Coalition policies to privatise the energy industry and brings confusion to private investors in renewables.

In 2024 the Queensland Conservation Council and Australian Conservation Foundation have gone into bat against nuclear power and SCEC hosted an online webinar as part of an ongoing campaign. Nothing is more important than acting now to try to limit global temperature rises.

It is sadly a story without an ending (at the time of publication in 2024) and is also unlikely ever to have a happy ending when politicians can overturn State laws and ignore community opposition in the face of economic "opportunities".

#### And Finally...

SCEC, along with a myriad of community groups and conservationists across Australia has advocated for sanity to prevail in the face of political opposition, economic opportunism and ecological decline for more than 40 years.

The campaigns featured are only a handful of the threats to the Sunshine Coast environment that SCEC has tackled. During the forty years of SCEC's activism, the conservation of our natural heritage has gone from something only promoted by "greenies" to a mainstream concern and an important component of what we value as our Sunshine Coast lifestyle.

SCEC is *Forty Years Strong* because of the people who have brought passion for the environment to their work, whether it is voluntary or paid. Many people have made great contributions over this time and unfortunately not all of them are in this book.

Thank you to every single person who has been part of SCEC during its four decades with apologies to those omitted.

Photographs and information compiled reflect what is available rather than a comprehensive coverage of 1980 – 2024. The old style paper records in the SCEC archive have provided a rich source of information flavoured with the times. Unlike correspondence, emails are not accessible. Digital records tend to reflect a paucity of details and websites are often ephemeral sources of information.

Special thanks are due to John Burrows who has generously made his photographs available to SCEC and to Jillian Rossiter whose collection of photos has added so much to these records.



The author Elaine Green with Jillian Rossiter

As an organisation, SCEC has empowered many people to acquire skills and make an important contribution. Apart from the major campaigns there have been so many submissions, objections, consultations and committees on which SCEC has been and continues to be represented. In the early days a volunteer Project Officer was the spokesperson for the various campaigns. Being a public face is not for everybody and most preferred supporting campaigns behind the scenes.

2024 Narelle McCarthy is SCEC's In campaigner, or rather Advocacy and Engagement Manager. She is the public face and has been in this particular role for more than a decade. Narelle started out as a volunteer and management committee member in 2006-07, then worked in administration, becoming General Manager in 2009 and Campaign Manager in 2010. The lure of working for Queensland Greens Senator Larissa Waters took her away but she returned in 2013 to the newly created Liaison and Advocacy position and she had represented SCEC for 11 years in this role.

SCEC as an amalgam of its member groups continues to be a strong advocate for the environment into its 50<sup>th</sup> decade. People power has changed governments and improved environmental regulation greatly, but there is so much more to do.

## **About the Author**



I have been associated with SCEC since 1985 and like everyone else in SCEC, I began as a volunteer. I worked initially in the first shopfront in Howard Street and then gravitated to the "back room". SCEC was a great training ground for me and many others and I was given opportunities to develop skills and interests. I became editor of the *Eco Echo* magazine after Richard Giles and continued in this very enjoyable role for 5 years.

I was President from 1988-91 and my passion for the environment led me to stand for election as a local Councillor. Amazingly I was elected. It was a tough 3 years and I chose not to renominate. I was awarded Honorary Life Membership of SCEC in 1993 and after moving to Maleny in 1994, worked with SCEC Member Groups Maleny Credit Union and Barung Landcare.

A highlight came in 1999 when I accepted a full time Brisbane-based position as Interim Coordinator for the Queensland Conservation Council. My time at SCEC proved valuable in representing QCC in State and Australian Government negotiations. My first "publication" was also in 1999 - Our Vanishing Natural Heritage: The Rare and Threatened Species of Maroochy Shire, designed as a ready reference manual on listed species of flora and fauna within the Shire for Council staff and for students.

I took on a task as Project Manager of a Cultural Heritage Mapping Project for South East Queensland Regional Water Quality Management Strategy (a forerunner of Healthy Waterways). This involved detailing places of special significance to people in each of the three river catchments by convening three community workshops in each catchment to coordinate input; editing a Historical and Cultural Heritage Survey of the Noosa, Maroochy and Mooloolah Rivers written by local historian Berenis and conducting 12 Oral History interviews., This was the first time I worked with my daughter Inga Green who proved a natural at oral history and a great researcher and editor. We have since worked on several publications together and I thank Inga for her work on this e-book.

The event organisation experience gained at SCEC encouraged me to take on a project in 2000 as Community Coordinator for Caloundra City Council's Centenary of Federation community celebrations - the *Journey of Celebration*. This was a challenging six-month project that culminated in 18 separate community activities running over 24 days plus 5 weeks of gallery exhibitions and 7 separate community celebrations. More than 40 community organizations across the City were involved in local celebrations and came together in a grand finale – a two-day festival From *the Mountains to the Sea* at Kings Beach.

One thing led to another and other projects included Public Consultation Coordinator on the Corporate Plan for Caloundra City Council, organising 8 community forums, 4 library displays and 2 public events, preparing display material, liaising with Councillors and the general public. I was responsible for devising the consultative strategy and implementing it in conjunction with the Director of Governance & Strategy. Another Centenary of Federation project was Dare to Dream that involved liaison with community artists in regional workshops and organizing logistics for artworks, musicians and community participation (200 people) in 4 successive parades, one each night at the Woodford Festival under the supervision of artistic director, Neil Cameron. I had been a volunteer with the Festival since 1988 in various roles and there was a lot of overlap between the festival in its early days and SCEC.

An opportunity to work with the Moreton Bay Waterways & Catchments Partnership (Healthy Waterways and now Healthy Land & Water) drew me to Brisbane for a fulltime position as Stakeholder Liaison Manager. In this role I mainly convened a series of quarterly stakeholder forums, attended meetings with Local. State and Federal Government representatives, provided political advice to my Project Director, assisted in the preparation of formal documentation for the Ministerial Policy Council and assisted with submission writing to government. I also coordinated the Sunshine Coast launches of the Healthy Waterways Annual Report Card and administered small grants for cultural heritage. It was an enjoyable and challenging position and I left to take up employment closer to home, having been offered the position at SCEC.

And so, the full circle came into my life when I accepted the position as General Manager of SCEC in January 2005. It was both comfortable and challenging. So much had changed. I worked with an Administrative Assistant, a fulltime Campaigner and a volunteer Management Committee as well as around 20 volunteers, plus more as needed for fundraisers.

I introduced a target-based income generation budget to try to balance out wide swings in income. Targets were set for fundraising from (a) memberships and donations; (b) magazine advertising; and (c) three annual fundraisers – World Environment Day celebrations, Sunshine Coast Environment Awards and a major Raffle. This worked well as it also mobilized volunteer effort behind these activities and targets were reached. At the same time, expenses were monitored and the organization was driven less by going for opportunistic grants to survive. Regular meetings with key Maroochy Shire Council staff were initiated to reduce conflict. Some excellent volunteers were given dedicated responsibilities and tasks and various placements with agencies and schools were undertaken on a regular basis.

I left SCEC reluctantly as my husband (Mark Ricketts) had obtained a long desired position working for a regional Pacific environment agency in Samoa. Living in Samoa was a wonderful experience. Initially I volunteered at Women in Business, an NGO dedicated to generating rural employment via micro credit and business training. Here I initiated accreditation for Oxfam Fair Trading for certified organic products. I joined and went onto the committee of a "women's networking group" that fundraised for local community groups and became more familiar with the network of community support groups in Apia. Then I worked for 18 months with a nongovernment organization called the Animal Protection Society of Samoa (APS) as a Business Manager and Mentor.

I set up many business systems that simply did not exist, compiled a Procedures Manual to guide operations and was funded by the International Fund for Animal Welfare to train Samoans in business management, grant administration and to write a Sustainability Plan. I also undertook the following two small projects as a consultant in Samoa: (2006) Coordinator, Staff Retreat for Australian High Commission in Apia, Samoa and (2006) facilitation work at a Bio Security regional Workshop. I returned to Australia due to my mother's illness and subsequent death and spent some time in Sydney with my father throughout 2008. I decided to change my life direction and the desire to write about contemporary environmental and social history became a priority. SCEC gave me my first "break" as a writer by sponsoring a Regional Arts Development grant for the book *Green Legends*. It was the beginning of my reinvention as a writer of local and environmental histories. I have since worked on the following publications as a writer, editor and co-editor:

- 2009 Green Legends: People Power on the Sunshine Coast - written in association with the Sunshine Coast Environment Council (SCEC) to celebrate the efforts of ordinary people making a difference
- 2010 Earth Dreams Magic: a Journey through the Blackall Range region - in association with the Hinterland Business Centre Inc. designed to promote Hinterland artists and the local area through stories on local history, people, and places
- 2010 Maleny: an Alternative History written upon the occasion of the death of community leader Jill Jordan to celebrate Maleny's special style of community development from the 1970s onwards
- 2011 Maleny Credit Union: Making Money Count - commissioned by the MCU Ltd Board on the occasion of a proposed merger to record the Credit Union's history since 1984
- 2013 The Sunshine Coast Environment: Extraordinary People and Places written for SCEC with Jillian Rossiter and Jenifer Simpson to celebrate the contributions of SCEC Honorary Life Members
- 2013 Sundale: Creating Communities 1963-2013 – a commemorative publication to celebrate the dedication of Sundale to residential care services for elders over a fifty year period

- 2017 A Landholders' Guide to Living on the Blackall Range – with Barung Landcare Association, including sections on geology, history, soils, weeds, native flora and fauna
- 2021 Piece by Piece: Conservation and Development on the Sunshine Coast 1960-2020 with the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland, Sunshine Coast and Hinterland branch, documenting sixty years of conservation and population growth
- 2021 They made a Difference: Sunshine Coast Environment Council Honorary Life Members 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, with Jillian Rossiter for the Sunshine Coast Environment Council
- 2022 **SOS: Save Our Species** with artist Jim Cox for an exhibition at Mary Cairncross highlighting the plight of some of our unique Australian wildlife
- 2023 **POP: Protect Our Pollinators** a second book with Jim Cox writing about Australian native insects and pollinators and their importance
- 2024 **FOF: Friend or Foe** third book in the series outlining effects of feral animals and birds on native wildlife
- 2024 e-book for the Sunshine Coast Environment Council Forty Years Strong

So here we are in 2024 and I am honestly grateful to SCEC for giving me so many opportunities that have enabled a varied "career" doing what I have loved.

I am indeed fortunate to have been able to work almost exclusively with community groups for the past thirty years and thoroughly recommend volunteering as an empowering experience that could change your life for the better.

## Member Groups in 2024

The Sunshine Coast Environment Council (SCEC) holds the honour of serving as the overarching entity for more than 50 Member Groups that operate throughout the area. Spanning from Bribie Island to Cooloola. encompassing both hinterlands and coastal areas. The dedicated endeavours of our Member Groups contribute significantly to the improvement and preservation of the region's natural environment.



## Australian Citizen Science Association

The Australian Citizen Science Association (ACSA) is the peak body for citizen science nationally. Citizen science is a form of science that involves public participation in diverse ways with the vision to be a community that supports, informs, and develops citizen science. Their mission is to advance citizen science through the sharing of knowledge, collaboration, capacity building, and advocacy.



## Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS)

The AMCS is an autonomous charitable organisation advocating for Australia's marine wildlife. It is run by a dedicated team of skilled and enthusiastic scientists, educators, volunteers, and champions who have been safeguarding Australian oceans for more than 40 years.



### Backyards for Biodiversity SEQ

Backyards for Biodiversity is dedicated to highlighting the importance and possibilities of urban biodiversity in South East Queensland. Their goal is to educate residents about the beauty of our native plants and wildlife, while promoting practical strategies like planting indigenous flora to support local fauna. Backyards for Diversity collaborate with local governments to raise awareness of the significance of biodiversity and implement sustainable practices that protect and enrich it.



WORKING FOR OUR FUTURE

#### **Barung Landcare**

For over 30 years, Barung Landcare has brought like-minded individuals together who share a commitment to protecting the magnificent natural environment along the Blackall Range and surroundings. Barung Landcare is dedicated to working for our future by supplying locally sourced native plants to protect and regenerate the landscape.



#### Bat Rescue Inc.

Bat Rescue Inc. is a non-profit volunteer organisation which works alongside the Queensland's Department of Environment and Science (DES) to rescue sick, injured and orphaned flying-foxes and microbats.

## Blackall Range Land Use and Planning Association Inc

Blackall Range Land Use and Planning Association was formed with the common purpose to protect and enhance the physical environment, heritage and productive economic base of the Blackall Range by influencing land use and town planning regimes, policy, decisions and practices.



## Bribie Island Environmental Protection Association Inc (BIEPA)

BIEPA's mission is to help the native flora and fauna on Bribie Island flourish. The BEIPA team regularly monitor the terrain and waterways to implement sustainable ecological practices that have a positive impact on the environment. BEIPA engages with local community members and council to promote sustainable ecotourism influence urban development.



### Coolum and North Shore Coast Care Group Inc

Formed in 2000, Coolum and North Shore Coast Care is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to protecting and maintaining the natural coastline's floral and fauna for future generations.





#### **Coolum Residents Association (CRA)**

CRA is a local community organisation that aims to identify and promote sustainable opportunities to preserve and enhance the amenity and facilities in Coolum Beach and surrounding areas.



#### **Conondale Range Conservation**

Formed 1976, Conondale in Range Conservation is a public platform for community members to raise conservation issues in the Conondale Ranges. Their association has been formally recognised for their environmental contribution, receiving both an Environment Award for Perseverance, and Special Award for Outstanding Achievement in Grassroots Campaigning.

#### **Cooran Earth Rights**

Cooran Earth Rights speaks for the local community, addressing environmental concerns in the area, including the Great Sandy Straits. As part of a global network of 450+ Australian groups, they oppose environmentally damaging practices for short-term mining profits.



### Crystal Waters Community Co-Operative Ltd

Crystal Waters is a privately owned village designed around Permaculture concepts. It incorporates the use of land, dams and waterways to produce organic food and build ecological housing. Crystal Waters also hosts Permaculture workshops and other events that educate and demonstrate the principles in practice.



### Currimundi Catchment Care Group Inc (CCCG)

CCCG is a volunteer community group whose aim is to stabilise and prevent erosion of coastal estuary banks and creeks. Members of CCCG help clean up the waterways, monitor water quality and remove invasive species from the surrounding areas.



#### **Development Watch Inc**

Development Watch aims to prevent inappropriate development in the Coolum district. Members regularly monitor the planning and decision-making processes in the area to ensure that planning schemes and laws are being properly implemented.



#### **ECOollaboration**

Maroochy Waterwatch is involved in many strategic planning activities for the broader Maroochy River issues and has a strong volunteer workforce actively improving the health for the river and surrounds.



## Environmental Legacy Foundation (ELF)

ELF contributes to the protection and enhancement of the natural environment and natural heritage, principally within the Sunshine Coast Region. ELF provide support for programmes and activities that educate and advocate for our unique ecosystems, our wildlife and our forests. They do this through donations to organisations and institutions committed to their mission.



#### Fraser Island Defenders Organisation (FIDO)

Formed in 1971, FIDO has campaigned for the protection and conservation of native flora and fauna under threat from human activity for over 50 years. FIDO is committed to working with the traditional landowners of K'gari to work towards sustainable solutions that balance conservation and tourism.



### **Friends of Buddina Ltd**

Their goal is to keep the Buddina community well-informed on proposed beachside developments, as well as educating residents on ways they can reduce their impact on the environment.



#### Friends of the Forest Inc.

Friends of the Forest Inc. are a creative and collaborative group that supports individuals and like-minded organisations in caring for their local environments in respectful & mutually supportive networks.





## Friends of Lake Weyba Inc

Friends of Lake Weyba aims to maintain the environmental excellence of Lake Weyba and the adjacent Noosa catchment through habitat restoration and preventing inappropriate development.

### **Friends of Yaroomba**

Friends of Yaroomba is a community organisation focuses on local environmental, social and cultural issues to develop sustainable solutions for generations to come. In recent years, they created a subcommittee Save Yaroomba, dedicated to preventing inappropriate development.



## Glasshouse Mountains Advancement Network Inc (GMAN)

GMAN is the major community and environmental group in the Glasshouse Mountains. They have their own nursery of local plants for Land for Wildlife properties and a number of plant sales each year. GMAN works with local koala carers to establish and maintain eucalypt trees.



### Koala Action Inc. (KAI)

Koala Action Inc. (KAI) is a volunteer not for profit incorporated association made up of individuals concerned about the long-term survival of the koala in Queensland.

KAI's objectives are to help koalas by urging local, state and federal government as well as businesses to retain native bush land habitat, provide resources to rehabilitate degraded bushland to increase its carrying capacity and encourage/fund the replanting of koala food trees and other natives in parks, reserves and open spaces.



#### **Hinterland Bush Links**

Hinterland Bush Links empowers and support local landholders to connect, restore and protect native vegetation in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland.



## Lake Baroon Catchment Care Group (LBCCG)

LBCCG is a small community group that has been actively working towards improving water quality in the Lake Baroon catchment area for three decades. As well as their work on-the-ground, they run various education initiatives aimed at raising awareness about environmental issues and the importance of sustainability.

## Landsborough Area Community Association (LACA)

LACA Inc. is a community-based organisation committed to improving the overall quality of life in the Landsborough community. By focussing on the social, economic and environmental issues they foster a culture of collaboration and inclusivity within the community.



#### The Landscape Band

The Landscape Band is made up of a group of people who believe in: Celebrating Australia's landscapes. Using music to create a sustainable planet. Using music to create a better society for all Australians. Protecting and restoring Koala habitats and rehabilitating injured Koalas.

## Manduka Community Settlement Co-operative

Manduka is a small community settlement coop located on 150 acres just outside of Maleny. Manduka residents embrace a simple living lifestyle by managing resources collaboratively and practicing ecologically sustainable land management.



### The Maple Street Co-op

The Maple Street Co-op is a health food shop supplying local, organic, wholesome and ethical products while providing support and education to our members and the Maleny community.



## Mary River Catchment Co-ordinating Committee

The aim of the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee is to raise awareness and promote sustainable and productive environmental practices in the community.



## Mooloolah River Waterwatch and Landcare Inc

Mooloolah River Waterwatch and Landcare Inc are a not-for-profit community group dedicated to the health, protection and enhancement of the Mooloolah River and its Catchment.

### Native Plants Queensland/Sunshine Coast

Native Plants Sunshine Coast is part of the state wide organisation known as Native Plants Queensland (NPQ), which was formed in 1957 to promote the horticultural potential of Australian native plants and preserve them through cultivation.



## Night Eyes Association Inc- Water and Landcare

Night Eyes is committed to preserving the natural terrain of the Pumice Stone Passage and its surrounding foreshores, waterways and canals.



#### **Noosa and District Landcare**

"Transforming our landscape together" is the main mission of the Noosa and District Landcare group. Their aim is to provide a productive and ecologically improved environment for future residents and visitors by promoting the values, protection and rehabilitation of the Noosa and Sunshine Coast Region.



### Noosa Biosphere Reserve Foundation

The Noosa Shire was designated Biosphere Reserve status under the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) program in 2007 in recognition of the Noosa community's commitment to maintaining sustainable development and biodiversity conservation.



Catchment Assn. Inc.

### Noosa Integrated Catchment Association, Inc (NICA)

Established in 1996, the Noosa Integrated Catchment Association, Inc (NICA) is a community-based not-for-profit organisation formed to coordinate and align natural resource management activities in the Noosa River catchment.



#### **Noosa Parks Associations Inc**

Noosa Parks Associations aims are to protect the natural environment within the greater Noosa-Cooloola region, encouraging both genuinely sustainable human behaviour and built environments.



# Organisation Sunshine Coast Association of Residents (OSCAR)

OSCAR is a non-partisan and not-for-profit umbrella/peak organisation covering resident and community organisations on the Sunshine Coast and Noosa local government areas. Their objective is to achieve a balance between natural and built environments that permits a comfortable lifestyle and biodiversity.



#### Permaculture Noosa Inc

Permaculture Noosa Inc. is an organisation that advocates sustainable living and promotes the principles of permaculture. Through education, community-building, advocacy and outreach they are working to create a more sustainable community on the Sunshine Coast.





## Point Cartright Care Group

The Save Point Cartwright website is dedicated to protecting and enhancing the natural values of Point Cartwright Reserve on the Sunshine Coast, Australia.



## Positive Change for Marine Life (PCFML)

Positive Change for Marine Life's key focus is to develop solutions to marine debris and pollution. Through their core values of understanding, education and respect, PCFML empowers communities to take action for our oceans, developing long-term initiatives which benefit the sea, as well as those who rely upon it for survival.

## Petrie Creek Catchment Care (PCCC)

PCCC is dedicated to the preservation and restoration of the Petrie Creek catchment. Their main aim is to create a stable, self-repairing and self-sustaining natural resource that can be enjoyed for generations to come.





# Queensland Water and Land Carers (QWALC)

Queensland Water and Land Carers (QWALC) is the peak body for natural resource management (NRM) volunteers in Queensland.



### **Reef Check Australia**

Reef Check Australia is an innovative citizen science focused charity dedicated to educating and empowering community volunteers to better understand, appreciate and protect oceans and marine environments. They help people to help reefs by providing the tools for the community to take positive action. Through a network of volunteers, we engage in citizen science, connect people with reef science, and undertake local conservation projects.

### Save our Glasshouse Mountains

Save our Glasshouse Mountains mission is to preserve the natural beauty, cultural significance, and diverse ecosystems of the Glass House Mountains for current and future generations.

### Sunshine Coast LETS

LETS is a not-for-profit community organisation that operates on a cashless trading system. The group's fundamental belief is that every individual has valuable skills and services to share with their community.



# Surfrider Foundation Sunshine Coast

Surfrider Foundation Sunshine Coast is an initiative that plays a significant role in preserving and protecting the Sunshine Coast coastline. Their main local campaign is the award-winning Double Island Clean Up Weekend, which runs twice a year, attracting 200+ volunteers to remove more than five tonnes of rubbish off our beaches.



# Sustainable Population Australia (SPA)

SPA is an advocacy group building awareness about the impact of population growth on our planet. The organisation's efforts are focussed on establishing an ecologically sustainable human population.



## TakeActionforPumicestonePassage (TAPP)

Formed in 2010, TAPP has been actively advocating for the protection and preservation of the Pumicestone Passage catchment – which is at risk from development.



### **Transition Town Nambour**

Transition Nambour is a community group of like-minded individuals interested in planning for a more resilient and sustainable future. The group was built on the principles of permaculture and encourage people to "Think Global, Act Local."



### **Ten Little Pieces**

"Every Little Piece Makes a Difference" – that's the philosophy behind the empowerment movement of Ten Little Pieces. Their aim is to raise awareness of and advocate solutions for plastic pollution on our beaches.



# WPSQ-Sunshine Coast and Hinterland Inc

WPSQ Sunshine Coast plays an active role in lobbying for the conservation and preservation of the natural environment under threat of rampant development.



## Wildlife Volunteers Association Inc (WILVOS)

WILVOS is a dedicated group of South East Queensland people who devote their time and effort in the rescue, rehabilitation and release of precious Australian native wildlife.



### Yandina and District Community Association (YADCA)

YADCA is a voice for the historic town of Yandina. For over 20 years their volunteer organisation has made submissions to local, state and federal governments on many issues including development, the natural environment and infrastructure.



#### **Yandina Community Gardens**

The Yandina Community Gardens practice permaculture and provide an opportunity for individuals to gain practical skills in cultivating their own food, while also promoting sustainable living practices.



#### Woodfordia Inc

Woodfordia Inc is a not-for-profit, community driven organisation. Their flagship event, the Woodford Folk Festival is held annually in the picturesque town of Woodford and has become one of the largest cultural events in the SEQ region.



### Zero Emissions Noosa (ZEN)

Zero Emissions Noosa (ZEN) is a communitybased organisation working together to achieve a goal of zero carbon emissions by 2026.

SCEC is forty years strong because of its Member Groups which span from Noosa to Caloundra and west to the Conondale Ranges.

Over this time these groups have combined with SCEC and other local community groups to campaign very successfully against a myriad of inappropriate development proposals.

When SCEC was formed, Noosa Parks Association and Wildlife Preservation Society had already existed since the 1960s, and joined the coalition. Both are members in 2024.

Other long term Member Groups that have been there since 1984 are:

Blackall Range Land Use and Planning Association (formerly Blackall Range Care and Protection Society);

Conondale Range Conservation (formerly Save the Conondale Range Committee);

Landsborough Shire Action Group (formerly Landsborough Area Community Association); and

Maple Street Co-operative Society – still a vibrant presence in Maple Street, Maleny.

The Sunshine Coast is a better place because of the combined efforts of SCEC and all these groups over four decades.



### Management Committees and Key People 1983 - 2024

AGM 1983-84 President: Paul O'Donnell Vice Presidents: Liz Kinnear, Richard Giles Secretary: Ganga Hawkins Treasurer: Ivan Guy Committee: Denise Farmer, Karen Robinson, Anne Wensley Coordinator: Stan Tutt

#### AGM 1984-1985

President: Ivan Guy Vice-Presidents: Paul O'Donnell, Garry Lawler Secretary: Karen Robinson Treasurer: Ganga Hawkins Committee: Sylvia Spring, Barbara Camplin, John McCabe, John Skelton (part year)

#### AGM 1985-1986

President: Karen Robinson Vice-Presidents: Garry Lawler, Paul O'Donnell Secretary: Ronnie ? Treasurer: Robyn Lawler Committee: Hilary McKenzie, Steve Wall, Ivan Guy, John Blyth, Coordinators: Stan Tutt, Ganga Hawkins,

AGM 1986-1987

President: Karen Robinson Vice-President: Garry Lawler, Arthur Harrold Secretary: Ganga Hawkins Treasurer: Robyn Lawler Committee: Ivan Guy, Harry Boorman, John McCabe, Noel Lindsay Coordinator: Karen Robinson

Incorporation was officially granted to Sunshine Coast Environment Council 22/12/1987

AGM 1987-1988 President: Ray Barber Vice-Presidents: John McCabe, Garry Lawler Secretary: Karen Robinson Treasurer: Moyna Collett Committee: Richard Giles, Ian Matthews, Mark Ricketts, Alison Smith Coordinator: Ganga Hawkins AGM 1988-1989 President: Elaine Green Vice-Presidents: Garry Lawler and Ganga Hawkins Secretary: Gillian Pechey Treasurer: Moyna Collett Project Officer: Mark Ricketts Education Field Officer: Alison Joy Smith Centre Coordinator: Pat English Magazine coordinator: Richard Giles Shop Coordinator: Sue Coleman

AGM 1989 - 1990 President: Elaine Green Vice-President: Garry Lawler Secretary: Gillian Pechey Treasurer: Moyna Collett Committee: Beryl Muspratt, Des Ritchie, Mark Ricketts Coordinator: Des Ritchie Shop Coordinator: Sue Coleman Project Officer: Mark Ricketts Education Officer: Beryl Muspratt

AGM 1990- 1991 President: Elaine Green Secretary: Barb Watkinson Treasurer: Jill Peck Committee: Mark Warnick, Mark Ricketts, Cecilia Porter Coordinator: Des Ritchie Shop Coordinator: Sue Coleman Project Officer: Mark Ricketts Education Officer: Beryl Muspratt

AGM 1991-1992 President: Des Ritchie Vice Presidents: Elaine Green, Mark Warnick Secretary: Barb Watkinson Jillian Rossiter (part year) Treasurer: Jill Peck (Barb Watkinson Assistant Treasurer) Committee: Mark Warnick, Cecilia Porter, Barbara Ramadge-Ross, Jan Fraser Coordinator: Des Ritchie Project Officer: Mark Ricketts Shop Manager: Sue Coleman Group Liaison Officer: Mark Warnick

AGM 1992-93 President: Des Ritchie Secretary: Jillian Rossiter Treasurer: Robyn Lawler Shop Manager: Sue Coleman LEAP Scheme Coordinator: Ray Marx

#### AGM 1993-1994

President: Des Ritchie to July then Joe Ruiz-Avila Vice Presidents: Heather Melrose, Jill Jordan, Elaine Green Secretary: Susie Chapman (Assistant Secretary: Heather Harford) Treasurer: Karen Southwell Assistant Treasurer: Robyn Lawler Coordinator: Susie Chapman Shop Manager: Jenny Knudsen

Conference Coordinator: Julia Langslow

#### AGM 1994-1995

President: Joe Ruiz-Avila Vice-Presidents: Vivien Coleman, Heather Melrose, Des Ritchie Secretary: Heather Harford Treasurer: Jane Hamwood Committee: Robyn Lawler, Garry Lawler, Jeni de Hayr, Jill Jordan, Susie Chapman, Elaine Green, Lindsay Holt, Jillian Rossiter Project Officer: Ashley Needham (assisted by Chris Jameson) Water Project Officer: Jenifer Simpson Shop Coordinator: Jenny Knudsen

#### AGM 1995-1996

President: Joe Ruiz-Avila Vice-President: Vivien Coleman, Des Ritchie, Heather Melrose Treasurer: Jane Minor Secretary: Heather Harford then Rick Albert Committee: Jacky Williams, Susie Chapman, Jillian Rossiter, Frank Cilas, Garry Thomas, Alan Kerlin, Jim Cash

#### AGM 1996-1997

President: Joe Ruiz-Avila Vice-President: Des Ritchie Secretary: Heather Harford (Rick Albert part year) Treasurer: Jane Hamwood Committee: Peter Isaacs, Jacky Williams, Susie Chapman, Jillian Rossiter

#### AGM 1997-1998

President: Vivien Griffin Vice-Presidents: Jim Cash, Jillian Rossiter Treasurer: Jane Hamwood/Minor Secretary: Josi Marriot Committee: Laurie Capill, Gaby Luft Tim Young, Di Thistlewaite, Janice Evans, Darryl Fry, Susie Chapman, Colleen Giles Shop Manager: Jenny Knudsen (Caroline Gould part

year) **Project Officer**: Lindsay Holt then Barbara Schwabe **Resource Library**: Alison O'Rourke, Carolynne O'Brien

#### AGM 1998- 1999

President: Vivien Griffin Vice-President: Jillian Rossiter, Jim Cash (part year), Ian Mackay (part year) Secretary: Josi Marriot (part year) then Ian Burrel (part year) Treasurer: Jane Hamwood/Minor Committee: Susie Chapman, Ian Burrell, Janice Evans, Laurie Capill, Darryl Fry, Tim Young, Richard Koerner, Gaby Luft, Di Thistlewaite Project Officers: Darryl Fry, Tim Young

AGM 1999-2000

Coordinator: Barbara Schwabe

President: Jillian Rossiter Vice- President: Vivien Griffin Secretary: Ian Burrell Treasurer: Jane Hamwood/Minor Committee: Laurie Capill, Darryl Fry, Tim Young, Richard Koerner, Gaby Luft Project Officer: Lindsay Holt

#### AGM 2000-2001

President: Jillian Rossiter Vice-President: Vivien Griffin Treasurer: Jane Hamwood Secretary: Alison Smith Committee: Michael Powell, Leigh Anderson, Lindsay Holt, Don McDonald Coordinator: Barbara Schwabe Liaison and Advocacy: Narelle McCarthy

#### AGM 2002-2003

President: Darryl Fry Vice-Presidents: Greg Wood, Lindsay Holt, Alison Smith Secretary: Julie Castles Treasurer: Jane Minor Committee: Don McDonald, David Percival, Ann Barker, Gareth Deakin Coordinator: Barbara Schwabe

#### AGM 2002-03

President: Darryl Fry Vice-Presidents: Lindsay Holt, Alison Smith, Greg Wood Treasurer: Jane Minor Secretary: Julie Castles then Gareth Deakin Committee: Ann Barker, Don McDonald, David Percival, Gareth Deakin, Ann Barker Coordinator: Barbara Schwabe

#### AGM 2003-2004

President: Michael Powell, Vice-President: Alison Joy Smith Treasurer: Marja-Leena Mason Secretary: Gareth Deakin, Russell Warner Committee: Val Lewis, Charmaine Foley, Christina Liebergreen, Ann Barker, Karen Robinson (resigned Dec 2003), Joy McNamara Coordinator: Barbara Schwabe Manager: David Brown (part year) AGM 2004-2005 President: Charmaine Foley Vice-Presidents: Christine Liebergreen, Valerie Lewis Treasurer: Joy McNamara Secretary: Russell Warner Committee: Elaine Green (part year), Mark Ricketts, Ann Barker Manager: David Brown then Elaine Green

AGM 2005-2006 President: Dr. Valerie Lewis Vice-President: Leena Mason Secretary: Keith Weier Treasurer: Michael Powell Committee: Mark Ricketts (part year), Jillian Rossiter, Karen Robinson (part year) Acting Coordinator: Jamie Quarrell then Keryn Jones Campaign Coordinator: Scott Alderson Manager: Elaine Green then Ian Christesen

#### AGM 2006 - 2007

President: Val Lewis Vice-President: Jillian Rossiter Secretary: John Burrows, Keith Weier (part year) Treasurer: Karen Robinson 2\*, Michael Powell (part year) Committee: Narelle McCarthy, Helen Hutchison Manager: Ian Christesen Office Coordinator: Keryn Jones Campaign Coordinator: Scott Alderson

#### AGM 2007 - 08

President: Valerie Lewis Vice President: Jillian Rossiter Secretary: John Burrows Treasurer: Karen Robinson 2\* Committee: Bev Horton, Helen Hutchison, Narelle McCarthy (part year) Coordinator: Keryn Jones then Narelle McCarthy Manager: Ian Christesen Campaign Coordinator: Scott Alderson then Keryn Jones (part year)

#### AGM 2008 - 2009

President: Valerie Lewis Vice-President: Jillian Rossiter Secretary: John Burrows Treasurer: Alexander Kohl Office Admin: Michelle McInnes Committee: Helen Hutchison, Bev Horton Manager: Ian Christesen then Narelle McCarthy Coordinator: Lisa Munro



AGM 2009-2010 President: Valerie Lewis, Vice President: Jillian Rossiter, Secretary: Helen Hutchison Treasurer: Alxander Kohl Committee: Ian Christesen, Brian Raison, Julie Failor, Lindsay Holt Manager: Narelle McCarthy Reception and Admin Officer: Debra Hoye

#### AGM 2010-2011

President: Dr. Val Lewis Vice-President: Jillian Rossiter Treasurer: Alexander Kohl Secretary: Helen Hutchison Committee: Brian Raison, Ian Christesen, Annie Nolan, Sonia Marshall Executive Officer: Wiebe Ter Bals Reception and Admin Officer: Debra Hoye

#### AGM: 2011-2012

President: Annie Nolan Vice President: Jillian Rossiter Treasurer: Sue Etheridge Committee: Brian Raison, Neil Tindale, Trevor Lloyd, John Burrows, Sonia Marshall Executive Officer: Wiebe Ter Bals

#### AGM: 2012-2013

President: Annie Nolan Vice President: Jillian Rossiter Secretary: John Burrows Treasurer: Sue Etheridge Committee: Ian Edwards, Brian Raison, Neil Tindale, Trevor Lloyd Executive Officer: Weibe Ter Bals

#### AGM 2013-2014

President: Keryn Jones Vice-President: Jillian Rossiter Treasurer: Sue Etheridge Minutes Secretary: Executive Officer Committee: Brian Raison, Neil Tindale, Trevor Lloyd, John Burrows Office Admin: Michelle McInnes then Karen Robinson 2 Liaison and Advocacy: Narelle McCarthy Executive Officer: Weibe Ter Bals

#### AGM 2014- 2015

President: Keryn Jones Vice President: Jillian Rossiter Treasurer: Sue Etheridge Minutes Secretary: Executive Officer Committee: Mary Jane Weld, Ian Edwards, Leigh Warneminde, Marcus Finch, Dave Knobel, Natalie Martin Booker Executive Officer: Weibe Ter Bals Administration Officer: Karen Robinson 2

\*(Note there are 2 different people called Karen Robinson)

AGM 2015-16 President: Keryn Jones then Wiebe Ter Bals Vice-President: Jillian Rossiter Treasurer: Sue Etheridge Secretary: Natalie Martin-Booker, Committee: Mary-Jane Weld, Leigh Warneminde, Executive Officer: Weibe Ter Bals then Coordinator Leah Hayes Administration Officer: Karen Robinson 2 Liaison and Advocacy: Narelle McCarthy

#### AGM 2016-17

President: Vivien Griffin Vice-President: Mary-Jane Weld Treasurer: Sue Etheridge Secretary: Natalie Martin-Booker Committee: Jillian Rossiter, Leigh Warneminde Coordinator: Leah Hayes Liaison and Advocacy: Narelle McCarthy Reception and Admin Officer: Debra Hoye

#### AGM 2017-2018

President: Vivien Griffin Vice-President: Jillian Rossiter Treasurer: Sue Etheridge Secretary: Tracy Burton Committee: John Salter Coordinator: Jackie Boyce then Peter Hogg Liaison and Advocacy: Narelle McCarthy Reception and Admin Officer: Debra Hoye

#### AGM 2018-2019

President: Vivien Griffin Vice-President: Jillian Rossiter Treasurer: Sue Etheridge Minutes Secretary: Peter Hogg Committee: John Salter, Jackie Boyce, Peter Hunnam, Michael Tyrell Coordinator: Natalie Frost then Peter Hogg Liaison and Advocacy: Narelle McCarthy

#### AGM 2019-20

President: Peter Hunnam (part year) then Jillian Rossiter)
Vice-President: Jillian Rossiter
Secretary: Peter Hogg
Treasurer: Sue Etheridge
Committee: Rolf Engel, Hilary McLeod, Kerri Watson
Reception and Admin Officer: Debra Hoye

AGM 2020-2021 President: Peter Hunnan then Jillian Rossiter then Derek Foster Vice President: Jillian Rossiter then Michael Kane Secretary: Peter Hogg Treasurer: Sue Etheridge Committee: Ben Child, Jason Rao Sellaiah, David Robertson AGM 2021 – 2022 President: Derek Foster Vice-President: Ben Child Secretary: Peter Hogg Treasurer: Sue Etheridge Committee: Jillian Rossiter, Andrew Picone, Kelly Matthews, Coordinator: Natalie Frost Liaison and Advocacy: Narelle McCarthy Reception and Admin Officer: Debra Hoye

AGM 2022-2023 President: Derek Foster Vice President: Benjamin Child (part year), Natalie Frost Treasurer: Sue Etheridge Secretary: Joanne Kohnke Committee: Kelly Matthews, Elaine Ricketts (part year), Alison Rickert, Ken Cross (part year)

AGM 2023 - 2024 President: Sally Jensen Vice-President: Ross Smith: Treasurer: Sue Etheridge: Committee members: Kelly Matthews: (part year), Kavita Maharaj: (part Year), Nina Davis, (part year), Mark Simpson: (part year), Samantha Masters: (part year), Quentin Brown: (part year), Aleisha Keating: (part year)

Thanks to Jillian Rossiter and Sara Vancea for compiling this information It is acknowledged that it is not comprehensive but done to the best of our ability from available records.



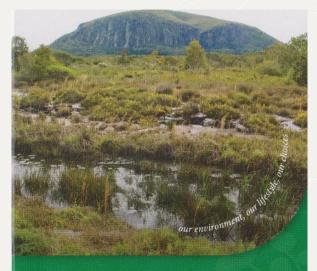
Des Ritchie with Costa from ABC 'Gardening Australia' program



"Our world is a web of interdependencies woven so tightly it sometimes becomes love." - Tim Flannery

**Examples of SCEC Brochures** 

Environment Council



## Protecting the Sunshine Coast region environment for over 40 years

Dedicated to safeguarding the region's ecosystems and biodiversity through environmental protection, advocacy and outreach.

scec.org.au

Photographs by John Burrows E-Book Copyright -SCEC 2024